

Teachers' Professional Development and Curriculum Awareness as Predictors of Lower Primary School Pupils' Learning Outcomes in Social Studies

Asia Pacific Journal of
Education, Arts and Sciences

Vol. 6 No.3, 1-7

July 2019

P-ISSN 2362-8022

E-ISSN 2362-8030

www.apjeas.apjmr.com

ASEAN Citation Index

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Date Received: May 22, 2019; Date Revised: July 3, 2019

Abstract -The study examined primary school pupils learning outcomes in Social Studies and determined predictive ability of teacher's professional development and curriculum awareness on lower primary school pupils' learning outcomes in Social Studies. The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study consisted of lower primary school pupils in Oyo State. Multistage sampling procedure was employed for the study. The sample size consisted of 600 pupils and 60 teachers. Three research instruments were developed, validated and administered on the participants. A research question was answered and one hypothesis tested. The data obtained were analyzed using frequency, percentage and multiple regression analysis. The results revealed that cognitive aspect of learning outcomes of primary school pupils in Social studies was excellent at 28.5% also the highest percentage (88.3%) of pupils displayed positive attitudes towards learning of Social Studies. The results further revealed that the combination of independent variables proved to be significantly adequate in predicting pupil's affective (attitude) learning outcomes in Social Studies measured by attitude towards Social Studies. The results yielded a coefficient of multiple regression (R) of .396 and a multiple correlation square (R^2) of .157. These values were statistically significant at 0.05 probability level. Teachers' pedagogical skills had the highest contribution ($B=.403$; $t = 2.122$; $p<.05$) in the prediction of pupils' affective learning outcomes in Social Studies. The finding has provided awareness on how the new curriculum content and teacher's professional development programmes will assist the teachers to contribute immensely to the pupils' learning outcomes in Social Studies.

Keywords: Professional development, Curriculum Awareness, Pupils, Learning outcomes, Knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

The world today is undergoing major transformations. The global transformations are multidimensional; affecting the technological, economic, social, cultural and political development of human communities particularly those of developing societies like Nigeria. Education in the generic and global context is a strategic instrument for social and economic transformation. The focus of education system all over the world is the development of the human capital required to meet present and future challenges of globalization and knowledge economy [1]. Education could therefore be seen as the process and results of assimilating a body of knowledge and of developing skills and habits to ensure a certain level of development of a person's cognitive needs and capacities and his/her ability to perform some kind of practical activity. It is a lifelong process which creates awareness about a particular issue for people to gain from.

Balogun [2] noted that education is the light without which the whole world would be in darkness. Education is the basis of scientific and technological breakthrough and the foundation of modernity, and all these have made all nations of the world accord immense priority to it, even though the level of priority ranges from one country to another. Education is dynamic and it changes with societal growth and development. A meaningful education is meant to ensure the survival of the learners within the society and, in turn, make positive impact on the society. Going by both international and national standards, the Nigerian educational system can be said to be in a state of confusion and disarray as a result of inconsistencies, non-implementation of education policies and corruption perpetrated by the stakeholders [3].

It is asserted by Federal Republic of Nigeria [4] that no nation can achieve economic, social and

technological progress and self-sufficiency without a good system of education to sustain its achievement.

The national philosophy of education in Nigeria recognizes the need for Social Studies education in building the desired social orientation needed after independence in mobilizing the young citizens for national development. The subject was adopted in Nigeria about 50 years ago as a result of the quest for relevance in the Nigerian education. Social Studies is believed to be a subject that could be used to solve problems of moral decadence and instill in the youth a sense of normal and decent behaviour in the society.

The teaching of Social Studies curriculum in school must be seen as one of those avenues of establishing strong bases for the production of effective citizens and forming a cohesive society that will support a notion of nation building [5]. However, the reality of the purpose of Social Studies depends among other factors on the quality of teachers available to teach the subject, the quality of teachers determines the quality of teaching and knowledge imparted to the learners and the quality of learning outcomes. The importance of teachers and the role they play in the educative process are central to basic education.

Successful educational improvement is intrinsically linked to professional development. As defined by [6], professional development is the experiences that take place within a collaborative culture of shared leadership, that increase educators' knowledge about content and pedagogy and enable them to use that knowledge to improve classroom and school practices that improve student learning. This definition describes the importance of the professional growth of the teacher as an individual, but also takes into account the need for teachers to learn as a community and the impact professional development has on the entire school community. It focuses on improving the conceptual skill-intellectual and abilities needed to do a better job. One of the most persistent problems facing Nigerian education is that of improving the quality of teachers so as to produce well qualified, conscientious, highly motivated, imaginative and committed teachers who would cope with the demands of the nation's educational system. The new millennium is filled with dramatic global transformation in technology, education, information, economy and social activities which pose immense challenges to Social Studies teachers.

Teachers of Social Studies need articulate professional orientation on how Social Studies as a subject could be appropriately taught if the goals of the subject must be realized to justify its introduction into

the school curricula. The subject matter is rich in cognitive, psychomotor and affective learning, it can provide the types of experiences necessary for raising a generation of disciplined, well adjusted, responsible and useful members of the Nigerian society. However, the extent to which the subject succeeds in achieving this purpose is largely determined by the degree to which the subject is properly taught. Proper teaching of the subject according to [7] depended on the degree to which the teachers possess the competences needed for the task.

Research in education has revealed that it is only through in-service training for teachers that the gulf between advancing knowledge and practice can be bridged. In-service training is designed to add to the knowledge and skills already possessed by a serving teacher [8]. The Federal Government of Nigeria, having identified teachers as the key actor in the education delivery process, recognized that no educational system surpasses the quality of its teacher. It therefore mounted aggressive programs to enhance the status of teachers through improved training and retraining as well as professionalization of teaching through Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) and National Teachers' Institute (NTI).

The National Teachers Institute was mandated by Act No 7 of 1978 to organize programme for upgrading and updating teachers at all levels, a task which it has been engaged in since its establishment. In order to achieve effective elementary Social Studies instructions, it requires continuous support for pupils learning and teachers need adequate curriculum content awareness for effective implementation of Social Studies curriculum. Also, they need articulate professional development on how Social Studies could be appropriately taught if the goals of social studies must be realized to justify its introduction into the school curricula. In a study carried out by Alabi [9] in Oyo metropolis, it was found that teacher development significantly related to teacher productivity. The researcher concluded that teachers need to acquire more knowledge through in-service training in order to improve their competencies.

Teacher's professional development plays an important role in changing teachers teaching methods and assisting teachers to move beyond a comprehension of the surface features of a new idea or innovation to a deeper understanding of a topic. In the study of Obi [10], he found that teachers' development programmes improves them both academically and professionally and apart from helping teachers to update their knowledge, development programmes

serves as a motivating factor for teacher efficiency. According to Gaibleand Burns [11], teachers' professional development provides opportunities for teachers to explore new roles, develop new instructional techniques, refine their practice and broaden themselves both as educators and as individuals. Aside from the individual satisfaction or financial gain that teachers may obtain as a result of participating in professional development opportunities, the process of professional development has a significant positive impact on teachers' beliefs and practices, students' learning, and on the implementation of educational reforms. Current research showed a strong correlation between teachers' training and students' school success [12].

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Training and re-training of teachers has been a continuous exercise for primary school teachers throughout the federation. This is aimed at keeping teachers abreast of current trends in subject areas and curriculum development. How this predicts learning outcomes of lower primary school pupils has not been researched into especially in Nigeria. This study therefore intended to examine primary school pupils learning outcomes in Social Studies in Oyo State and determine predictive ability of teachers' professional development and curriculum awareness on lower primary school pupils learning outcomes in Social Studies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to examine primary school pupils learning outcomes in Social Studies in Oyo State; and determine predictive ability of lower primary school Social Studies teachers' professional development and curriculum content awareness on lower primary school pupils learning outcomes in Social Studies.

METHODS

The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study consisted of lower primary school pupils and their teachers in Oyo State. Multistage sampling procedure was employed for the study. The three Senatorial Districts were used for the study. In each Senatorial District, two Local Government Areas were selected randomly. The sample size consisted of 600 pupils and 60 teachers from the six LGAS that were selected randomly. Five schools were selected from each of the six LGAS that make a total of 30 schools. Twenty primary III pupils

intact class and two Social Studies teachers were selected in each of the schools. Three instruments were used for the study. Social Studies Pupils Achievement Test (SPAT) which consists of 20 multiple choice objective questions on Social Studies topics that are in the syllabus and have been taught by the teachers. The coverage of the questions was limited to the pupils' syllabus in primary three and the level of coverage in different selected schools was adequately considered. The instrument was meant to measure the cognitive (knowledge) aspect of lower primary pupils learning outcomes in Social Studies. Pupils Attitudinal Questionnaire (PAQ) consists of 15 items used to measure the affective (attitude) aspects of pupils learning outcomes in Social Studies and Teachers' Professional Development and Curriculum Awareness Questionnaire (TCAQ) has five sections: Section A consists of the teachers' information. This includes the local government area, school name, gender, qualification, year of experience, and attendance on any professional development programme. Section B contains 10 items which was used to seek information on teachers' pedagogical skills. Section C contains 13 items that were used to get information on teachers' effectiveness towards teaching Social Studies. Section D consists of 10 items that were used to seek information on teachers' attitude towards learners while the section E contains 12 items which seeks information on level of teachers' awareness of the new curriculum. The items were rated using 4points Likert scales: SA- Strongly Agree, A- Agree, D- Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree. Data obtained were analyzed using frequency, percentage and multiple regression analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sequence of the presentation and the discussion is in accordance with that of the study research question and hypothesis

Table 1. Cognitive Aspect of Learning Outcomes of Pupils in Social Studies

Cognitive Aspect of Learning Outcomes	F	%
Poor	107	17.8
Fair	105	17.5
Good	109	18.2
Very Good	108	18.0
Excellent	171	28.5
Total	600	100.0

Table 1 shows the learning outcomes (Knowledge) of primary school pupils in Social Studies in Oyo State. It can be observed that 17.8% of the pupils performed

poorly, the performances of 17.5% of the pupils were fair, 18.2% had good performance, 18.0% had very good performance while 28.5% of the pupils had excellent performance. There is an indication from this result that the learning outcome of primary school pupils in Social studies was good.

Table 2: Affective Aspect of Learning Outcomes of Pupils in Social Studies

Pupils Attitude towards Social Studies	F	%
Negative	70	11.7
Positive	530	88.3
Total	600	100.0

Table 2 shows the learning outcomes (attitudes) of primary school pupils towards Social Studies in Oyo State. It is shown that 11.7% had negative attitude towards Social Studies while 88.3% of the pupils had positive attitudes toward learning Social Studies. It is therefore shown that the vast majority of the primary school pupils sampled in this study displayed positive attitudes towards Social Studies.

Table 3: Summary of multiple regression analysis of the predictive ability of teachers' professional development and curriculum awareness on primary school pupils learning outcome (performance) in Social Studies.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
Pedagogical skills					
Teachers' effectiveness	.379	.144	.081	2.31	.07
Teachers' attitudes					
Curriculum contents awareness					

Std. Error of the Estimate: 1.95014

Table 3 shows that the predictive ability of teachers' professional development and curriculum awareness on lower primary school pupils learning outcomes in Social Studies yield a coefficient of multiple regression

(R) of .379 and a multiple correlation square (R^2) of .144. These values are not statistically significant at 0.05 probability level. This implies that the combination of teachers' professional development and curriculum awareness could not adequately predict lower primary school pupils' cognitive learning outcome in Social Studies. These variables accounted for 14.4% of the observed variance in the pupils' cognitive learning outcome in Social Studies. The predictive contributions of each of the independent variables are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 shows the predictive contributions of each of the teachers' professional development variables and curriculum awareness to dependent variable. Pedagogical skills and teachers' effectiveness had t-values of 1.551 and -1.855 respectively. Also, the values of the beta weights for the variables are .297 and -.375 respectively. The t-value and beta weight for teachers' attitudes are -.623 and -.106. Curriculum contents awareness had respective t-value and beta weight of 2.467 and .362. Out of these variables, only curriculum contents awareness made significant contribution to the prediction of pupils' cognitive learning outcome in Social Studies at 0.05 level of confidence.

From the values of beta weights and t-ratio for each independent variable, it is shown that curriculum contents awareness had the highest contribution in the prediction of pupils' cognitive learning outcome in Social Studies followed by teachers' effectiveness, then, pedagogical skills while teacher attitudes had the lowest contribution in the prediction of the dependent variable.

Table 5 shows that the predictive ability of teachers' professional development and curriculum awareness on lower primary school pupils learning outcomes in Social Studies yield a coefficient of multiple regression (R) of .396 and a multiple correlation square (R^2) of .157. These values are statistically significant at 0.05 probability level.

Table 4: Relative contribution of each of teachers' professional development variables and curriculum awareness to pupils' cognitive learning outcome in Social Studies.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	10.173	2.967		3.428	.001
Pedagogical skills	.187	.120	.297	1.551	.127
1 Teachers' effectiveness	-.173	.093	-.375	-1.855	.069
Teachers' attitudes	-.065	.105	-.106	-.623	.536
Curriculum contents awareness	.133	.054	.362	2.467	.017

Table 5: Summary of multiple regression analysis of the predictive ability of teachers' professional development and curriculum awareness on primary school pupils learning outcome (attitudes) in Social Studies.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
Pedagogical skills						
Teachers' effectiveness						
Teachers' attitudes	.396	.157	.095	1.55227	2.557	.049
Curriculum contents awareness						

Table 6: Relative contribution of each of teachers' professional development variables and curriculum awareness to pupils' affective learning outcome in Social Studies.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	7.557	2.362		3.199	.002
Pedagogical skills	.203	.096	.403	2.122	.038
1 Teachers' effectiveness	-.045	.074	-.121	-.605	.548
Teachers' attitudes	-.110	.083	-.222	-1.320	.192
Curriculum contents awareness	.074	.043	.253	1.736	.088

This implies that the combination of teachers' professional development and curriculum awareness is adequate predictors of lower primary school pupils' affective learning outcome in Social Studies. These variables accounted for 15.7% of the observed variance in the pupils' affective learning outcome in Social Studies.

Table 6 shows the predictive contributions of each of the teachers' professional development variables and curriculum awareness to dependent variable. As shown in Table 6, pedagogical skills and teachers' effectiveness had t-values of 2.122 and -0.605 respectively. Also, the values of the beta weights for the variables are .403 and -0.121 respectively. The t-value and beta weight for teachers' attitudes are -1.320 and -0.222 . Curriculum contents awareness had respective t-value and beta weight of 1.736 and .253. Out of these variables, only pedagogical skills made significant contribution to the prediction of pupils' affective learning outcome in Social Studies at 0.05 level of confidence. From the values of beta weights and t-ratio for each independent variable, it is shown that teachers' pedagogical skills had the highest contribution in the prediction of pupils' affective learning outcome in Social Studies followed by curriculum contents awareness, then, teacher attitudes while teachers' effectiveness had the lowest contribution in the prediction of the dependent variable. It can be concluded from these results that while teachers' professional development and curriculum awareness significantly predict lower primary school pupils' affective learning outcome measured by

attitude in Social Studies, these independent variables were not significant predictors of lower primary school pupils' cognitive learning outcome measured by performance in Social Studies.

DISCUSSION

The finding of the study on pupils learning outcomes in cognitive aspect reveal that 18.2% of pupils had good performance, 18.0% very good performance and 28.5% had excellent performance. From this result it could be confirmed that pupils' knowledge of Social Studies was good while on the affective aspect of learning outcomes (attitude) shows that vast majority of the pupils show positive attitudes towards Social Studies as a subject. This result may be as a result of teachers' pedagogical skills and curriculum awareness.

The result revealed that the combination of predictor variables (pedagogical skills, teachers' effectiveness, attitudes and curriculum content awareness) could not adequately predicts pupils' cognitive learning outcomes in Social Studies, when taken together and are not statistically significant at 0.05 probability level. This may be due to the fact that pupils' cognitive learning outcomes are dependent upon so many variables. Meanwhile only curriculum contents awareness made significant contribution to the prediction of pupils' cognitive learning outcomes in Social Studies at 0.05 level of confidence. This is because it has the highest contribution in the prediction of pupils' cognitive learning outcome in Social Studies

followed by teachers' effectiveness and pedagogical skills. The teachers' attitudes had the lowest contribution in the prediction of the dependent variable. Also, the result on the amount of variance accounted for by the predictor variables showed that the prediction model used is reliable as shown by the multiple regression correlation R and R square.

The findings revealed that the combination of predictor variables (pedagogical skills, teachers' effectiveness, attitudes and curriculum content awareness) are adequate predictors of lower primary pupils' affective learning outcomes in Social Studies when taken together and are statistically significant at 0.05 probability level. Out of these variables, only pedagogical skills made significant contribution to the prediction of pupils' affective learning outcomes in Social Studies at 0.05 level of confidence.

Findings with respect to contributions of the predictor variables (pedagogical skills, teachers' effectiveness, attitudes and curriculum content awareness) showed that two of the variables (curriculum awareness and pedagogical skills) contributed significantly to pupils' learning outcomes in Social Studies. This finding is in line with that of Locke [13] who reported in his study that teachers' regular attendance in conferences, seminars, workshops and re-training programmes resulted in improvement of skills and hence quality output. Findings, however, indicated that teachers' effectiveness and attitudes did not contribute significantly to the prediction model for pupils' learning outcomes in Social Studies. The finding goes contrary to that of Okpala and Onocha [14] who reported in their study of teacher and student characteristics as correlates of learning outcomes in mathematics that teachers' attitude towards teaching significantly predicts students' attitude as well as achievement in Social Studies. The result supported that of Joshua and Kristonis [15] who found in their study that Nigerian teachers condemn the use of students' achievement scores as indicators of teachers' competence, performance or effectiveness. Also, the result corroborated that of Nuhfer [16] and Pozo-Munzo et al. [17] who warned that students rating should be one of a comprehensive evaluation system and should not be the only measure of teachers' effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from this study that the combination of predictor variables (pedagogical skills, teachers' effectiveness, attitudes and curriculum content awareness) could not adequately predicts pupils' cognitive learning outcomes in Social Studies while the combination of predictor variables (pedagogical skills, teachers' effectiveness, attitudes and curriculum content awareness) are adequate predictors of lower primary pupils' affective learning outcomes in Social Studies. Pedagogical skills and curriculum content awareness had a predictive ability on pupils' learning outcomes in Social Studies, while effectiveness and attitude did not. As such, teachers' pedagogical skills and curriculum content awareness should be focused on when trying to look for the factors that contribute to lower primary school pupils' learning outcomes in Social Studies.

RECOMMENDATION

The stakeholders in education need to take into consideration the needs of the learners before organizing teachers' professional development training programmes and also put into consideration the independent variables that were discussed in this study while addressing lower primary school pupils' learning outcomes problems in Social Studies and other subjects. In other to achieve high learning outcomes and competence, qualified teachers should handle the pupils' right from the lower primary school level. If this is done, it would go a long way to enhance high learning outcomes of pupils, achieve the main objectives of teaching Social Studies in school and also contribute to holistic development of the learners.

The study involves only the teachers and pupils of lower primary level. The study could therefore be repeated in the middle and upper basic levels for the purpose of generalization. The pupils' responses to the Achievement test might not be a true representation of their performance level due to their awareness that the test is not meant for promotional purpose in the school.

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