

Inclusive Education and Gender as Determinants of Social Studies Students' Attitude Towards Learning of Social Studies

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The study investigated inclusive education and gender as determinants of social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies in College of Education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. The aim was to determine the relationship between inclusive education, gender, and social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies. Two hypotheses were postulated to guide the study. A total of 150 randomly selected social studies students across the Department of Social studies, College of Education, Agbor, Delta State were administered with inclusive education scale and social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies questionnaire for data collection. The hypotheses were analysed using Multiple Regression tested at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that the criterion variable (social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies) showed that social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies correlates positively, and low towards inclusive education. Also, gender was not a determinant of both social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies and their inclusive education in schools' activities. The results also showed that only social studies students' inclusion in educational activities with the regression coefficient (b) of 0.258, and a beta weight of 0.296 significantly contributed to social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies, while the contribution of gender was not significant in predicting social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies. Based on these findings recommendations were made.

Keywords: inclusive education, gender, social studies, social studies students' attitude and learning of social studies

Introduction

Inclusive education, gender, attitude, and learning are all effective aspects of social studies teaching and learning. The teaching and learning of social studies exposes learning to the importance of access, equity, and quality in all sphere of human endeavour. Mezieobi (2016) has noted that social studies as a discrete subject in schools are essential for effective living in every environment and society including Nigeria. According to Osakwe (2013), social studies are a course of study that studied human beings with various capacities of his interaction with his fellow counterparts. Social studies are a programme of study which a society uses to instill in students or learners the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions it considers important in the relationships human beings have with each other, their world, and themselves (Mezieobi, Ossai, & Young, 2013). Furthermore, the relative newness of social studies in Nigeria in general and in Nigerian schools in particular, coupled with

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varieties of persons, professional social studies educators, and non-professionals or generalist social studies personnel who are associated with social studies have led to an overdose of social studies definitions (Mezieobi, Fubara, & Mezieobi, 2018). The all encompassing definition of social studies is as an integrated field of study which probes man's symbiotic relationships with his environments, endows man with the reflective or contemplative capacities, intellectual, effective, social, and work skills, to enable him to understand his world and its problems, and to rationally solve or cope with them for effective living in the society (Mezieobi et al., 2018).

On the other hand, attitude is the opinion and feelings everyone has about something. Çetin (2006) posits that attitude is a tendency attributed to individuals and creates ideas, feelings, and behaviours about a psychological object in an orderly manner. According to Kara (2010), attitudes cause individuals to always behave in the same way to people, objects, events, and foundations are constant and unchangeable beliefs, feelings, and tendencies. Attitude can alter every aspect of a person's life, including education. Learning on the other hand is the acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught. Learning is a process of acquiring new or modifying the existing knowledge, behaviours, skills, and values. It is an active process that is built on prior knowledge. Learning occurs in social environment, situated in an authentic context. However, because of the nature of learning, it requires learners' motivation and cognitive engagement. In all, learning is a process that results in a change in knowledge or behaviour as a result of experience.

Social studies students' attitude to learning of social studies determines their ability and willingness to learn social studies. If negative attitudes are not altered, a social studies student is unlikely to continue his or her education beyond what is required. Social studies students who have negative attitudes towards education activities are found to exhibit challenging behaviour including anti-social and off-task behaviour (Awang, Jindal-Snape, & Barber, 2013). Changing social studies students' negative attitude towards learning of social studies is a process that involves determining the factors driving the attitude and using this information to bring about a change. While the positive attitudes serve a better comprehension of the nature of learning for the social studies learners, it also makes the social studies students more open to learning, increases their expectations from learning process, and reduces their anxiety levels. Therefore, attitude is considered as an essential factor influencing learning of all subjects including social studies.

The study is interested in inclusive education. Inclusive education is one of the main factors of attitude towards learning. Mezieobi and Chikwelu (2015, p. 109), inclusive education/Education for All (EFA) as it is fondly called can be "conceptualized as an international educational striving or programme geared at providing life long learning opportunities" "for all citizens, young or old, in and out of school" (Mbachu, 2011, p. 257). Mezieobi and Chikwelu (2015, p. 109) further noted that the above statements are "with a view of eradicating illiteracy, ignorance and poverty and boosting the all round development of the human capital". Also, the Save the Child Document (2014) pinpointed that

inclusive education is one dimension of a rights-based quality education which emphasizes equity in access and participation, and responds positively to the individual learning needs and competences of all children. Inclusive education is child-centered and places the responsibility of adaptation on the education system rather than the individual child. Together with other sectors and the wider community, it actively works to ensure that every child, irrespective of gender, language, ability, religion, nationality or other characteristics, is supported to meaningfully participate and learn alongside his/her peers, and develop to his/her full potential. (Save the Child Document, 2014, p. 53)

All people have a right to education. Inclusive education is an approach that ensures the presence, participation, and achievement of all students in education. This may be in formal schools, or in non-formal places of learning, such as extra-curricular clubs and humanitarian camps (Sambo & Bwoi, 2015). It often involves working to change the structures, systems, policies, practices, and cultures in schools and other institutions responsible for education, so that they can respond to the diversity of students in their locality. Inclusion emphasizes opportunities for equal participation, but with options for special assistance and facilities as needed, and for differentiation, within a common learning framework (Sightsavers, 2011). In view of inclusive education, teachers are the driving force to the success of the programmes, including students with disabilities into regular classes. The prepared social studies teachers are the custodians to advocate inclusive education programmes in order to make it more realistic and profitable to persons with special needs which kick against discrimination and stigmatization that is usually accorded to them by the populace. Inclusion is a step further in mainstreaming. It is the principle applied to accommodate/include all human beings, thus the full spectrum of diverse abilities, with one system, in such a manner that all involved can be assured of being successful, equal, and quality participation in real-life experiences from birth-death (Burden, 2018).

Gender is another variable of the study. The gender differences can never be ignored in any society; similarly, attitude towards learning in higher education may also likely be influenced by gender. According to Oba-Adenuga and Oba-Adenuga (2017) gender is usually a contextual issue in research. To this end, Muhammad, Syed, and Khalid (2015) found that gender greatly influenced student's attitude towards learning. Also, D. Voyer and S. D. Voyer (2014) revealed that females perform better in academics than their male counterparts and results were statistically significant. In addition, Oluwagbohunmi (2014) disclosed that male students are better than their female counterparts and the results were statistically significant.

Many studies had examined different variables as determinants of attitudes to learn among students of higher learning. For instance, Ludwig, Burton, Weingarten, Milan, and Myers (2015) examined the health of students; Sharma (2014) studied classroom environment; Mosteller (1995) investigated location of the institution (urban and rural) to be a significant factor contributing to students' attitude towards learning; Gbore (2013) examined relative contributions of teachers' variables and students' attitudes; Sharma and Jha (2014) surveyed parents' educational achievements; Johnson (2011) worked on class size; Thompson, Robertson, Curtis, and Frick (2013) studied students with anxiety; while Oloyede (2010) carried out study on self-concept. However, not many studies combined inclusive education and gender as correlates with social studies students' attitudes towards learning of social studies in higher institution. It is against this background that this study examined inclusive education and gender as determinants of social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies in College of Education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were raised to guide the study.

- (1) There is no significant composite effect of inclusive education and gender on social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies; and
- (2) There is no relative significant effect of inclusive education and gender on social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies.

Methods

Research Design

The research design used for the study was descriptive survey method. Descriptive research design was used in order to understand the characteristics of organizations that follow certain common practices. The goal of descriptive study hence is to offer the researcher a profile or to describe relevant aspects of the phenomena of interest from an individual and organizational perspectives.

Setting of the study

The setting of the study was College of Education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. The institution is one of the Delta state owned colleges of education located in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State. Therefore, the total population for the study comprised the entire students of College of Education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria.

Participants

The participants for this study comprised one hundred and fifty (150) social studies students of College of Education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. The one hundred and fifty (150) samples (75 males and 75 females) were selected through simple random sampling technique from NCE and degree of the institution.

Instrument

The instrument used for this study was questionnaire titled “Inclusive Education Scale and Social Studies Students’ Attitude Towards Learning of Social Studies Inventory”. The questionnaire comprised of sections A, B, and C. Section A comprised the bio-data of the respondents such as age, course of study, department, gender, etc.; section B comprised fifteen (15) items drawn on inclusive education while section C comprised fifteen (15) items on social studies students’ attitude towards learning of social studies. The items were structured in a 4-Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was given face validity by two experts from the Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria. In order to test for internal consistency of the instrument, test retest was adopted and using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC), a coefficient of 0.72 was obtained. The scoring of the items was as follows: SA = 4 marks, A = 3 marks, D = 2 marks, SD = 1 mark for positive items while reversed scores were allocated to negative items.

Procedure

The researcher and two research assistants visited the campus of College of Education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. The researcher being an academic staff of the institution made the administration of the questionnaire easy to the respondents. The one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires administered were retrieved same day on the spot.

Data Analysis

Data generated through the use of the instrument were analysed using Multiple Regression. The computation was done using SPSS 15.0 statistical package.

Results

Ho₁: There is no significant composite effect of inclusive education and gender on social studies students’ attitude towards learning of social studies.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistic and Correlation Matrix for the Relationship Between the Predictor Variables and Criterion Variable

Variables	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies	Inclusive education	Gender
Social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies	150	14.8733	2.22342	1.000	0.299	-0.076
Inclusive education	150	14.6067	2.55121	0.299	1.000	-0.051
Gender	150	1.45	0.499	-0.076	-0.051	1.000

The result from the table indicates the mean and standard deviation of the participants. The respondents value for students' attitude was $M = 14.8733$, $SD = 2.22342$, inclusive education was $M = 14.6067$, $SD = 2.55121$, while gender had $M = 1.45$, $SD = 0.499$. Meanwhile, the matrix correlation between the two variables (inclusive education and gender) and the criterion variable (social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies) showed that social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies correlates positively and low with inclusive education. Also, gender was not a determinant of both social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies and inclusive education or their inclusion in learning activities.

H_{02} : There is no relative significant effect of inclusive education and gender on social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies.

Table 2

Co-efficient and t-Value of the Regression of the Predictor to Social Studies Students' Attitude Towards Learning of Social Studies

Variables	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		t	Sig.
	b	Std. error	Beta			
(Constant)	11.500	1.158			9.928	0.000
Inclusive education	0.258	0.069	0.296		3.759	0.000
Gender	-0.270	0.351	-0.061		-0.771	0.442

Dependent Variable: Social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies.

Results of the regression analysis show that only inclusive education with the regression co-efficient (b) of 0.258, and a beta weight of 0.296 significantly contributed to social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies, while the contribution of gender was not significant in predicting social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies. The prediction equation is therefore as follows:

$$\text{Social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies} = 11.500 + 0.258IE - 0.270G$$

On the basis of the result the null hypothesis which proposed a not significant contribution of the individual variable to the prediction of social studies students' attitudes towards learning of social studies was accepted for inclusive education and rejected for gender.

From Table 3, it was observed that the independent variables gave a co-efficient of multiple regression (R) of 0.305, multiple R^2 (0.093), and adjusted $R^2 = (0.081)$, which indicated that 93% of the two variables accounted for the social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies. Therefore, the analysis showed that the independent variables as a block did not contribute to the social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies. The table from the analysis of variance is also indicated, it produced an F-ratio 7.531 and was found to be insignificant at 0.05 levels.

Table 3

Summary of multiple Regression Analysis Between the Predictor Variable and Criterion Variable

Multiple R (adjusted) = 0.305 ^a , Multiple R^2 (adjusted) = 0.093, Adjusted R^2 = 0.081, Std. error of the estimate = 2.13193					
Model	Sum of squares	DF	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	68.461	2	34.231	7.531	0.368 ^b
Residual	668.132	147	4.545		
Total	736.593	149			

Notes. a: dependent variable: Social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies; b: predictors: (constant), gender, inclusive education (IE).

Discussion of the Findings

Hypothesis one states that there is no significant composite effect of inclusive education and gender on social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies. The result from the study indicates that the matrix correlation between the two variables (inclusive education and gender) and the criterion variable (social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies) shows that social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies correlates positively and low with inclusive education. Also, gender was not a determinant of both social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies and inclusive education. This result is in agreement with Al-Mamun, Rahman, Rahman, and Hossaim (2012) who found that respondents have positive attitudes towards learning irrespective of their gender. Also, Yu (2010) considered attitudes as a component of motivating students to learn. Also, comparing male and female attitudes towards learning, Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi, and Alzwari (2012) revealed the attitude of female students towards English Language is slightly different from that of their male counterparts. Equally, Oluwagbohunmi (2014) and D. Voyer and S. D. Voyer (2014) revealed that females perform better than their male counterparts in learning outcomes and results were statistically significant. However, Fakeye (2010) found that social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies is not gender-related. The present study showed that there is no composite effect of inclusive education and gender on social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies. This may be as a result of the fact that participants live in the same environment and have the same vision—they are all being trained to become social studies teachers. They are exposed to the same teaching experiences.

Hypothesis two states that there is no relative significant effect of inclusive education and gender on social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies. Results of the regression analysis showed that only inclusive education with the regression coefficient (b) of 0.258, and a beta weight of 0.296 significantly contributed to social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies, while the contribution of gender was not significant in predicting social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies. Therefore, the result of the null hypothesis which proposed a no significant contribution of the individual variable to the prediction of social studies students' attitudes towards learning of social studies was accepted for inclusive education and rejected for gender. The result of this study corroborates Aryana (2010) who found a positive correlation between inclusion and attitude towards learning. In addition, Roman, Cuestas, and Fenollar (2008) revealed that inclusion has the strongest impact on learning and that improving inclusive education is important. Also, Ras-Bera (1990) investigated the relationship between inclusion and attitudes to studies and found a direct relationship with each other. Furthermore, results derived from Girardi's (2005) study quantitatively demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between inclusive education and attitudes towards learning. However, gender was found to be not significant to social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies.

Conclusion

Evidence from literature and results from this study revealed the relationship between gender, inclusive education, and social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies. The research shows that inclusive education will affect social studies students' attitude towards learning of social studies. Therefore, social studies students should be exposed to an interesting classroom environment with an experience that is inclusive. Comfortable learning environment that is inclusive will create a good attitude and reduce the bad attitudes. Hence, the social studies and other servicing lecturers need to identify the real attitude of social studies students and thus be able to find a way to help and attract social studies students in their learning.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, it was recommended that:

1. Social studies teachers should organise teaching environment in a way that will make learning interesting to their students. The use of modern technology including robotic technology and computer technology as effective strategies for promoting social studies students' engagement in learning is very important.
2. Positive school ethos and good rapport with social studies teachers are associated with positive behaviour in social studies students which is a major positive factor towards learning. Social studies teachers should enforce students' adherence to school rules, and also maintain cordial relationship with their students.
3. Social studies lectures should build up an excellent rapport with students for this makes the classroom attractive and enjoyable platform for learning.
4. Inclusive education should be promoted in social studies classrooms.
5. Schools where social studies are taught as a subject, discipline, course, and so on should be inclusive.
6. Social studies students' inclusion in schools' activities will help in exposing them to good and positive attitudes.

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