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TEACHERS PERCEPTION OF THE USE OF SOCIAL STUDIES CONCEPTS IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

The study surveyed teachers' perception of the use of Social Studies concepts in conflict management. The study was a descriptive survey research. Thirty-one Social Studies teachers from sixteen public secondary schools in Sapele, Delta State were sampled. The main instrument was the teacher made test. The data collected were analysed using the t-test statistic. The result showed that female and male teachers generally accepted that Social Studies concepts could be used to manage conflict. Teachers' acceptance that Social Studies concepts could be used in conflict management was found not to depend on experience. The study recommended that desirable Social Studies concepts such as unity, honesty, co-operation, love, peace, tolerance, and patriotism should be encouraged by teachers among students and that the content of Social Studies should include the study of national and international conflicts and its effects on human population.

In recent times, much attention has been given to the need for stability, peace, unity and peaceful co-existence. The Nigerian state especially in this present democratic era has been faced with a number of conflicts most especially in the Niger–Delta Region. These conflicts ranged from ethnic, socio–political, economic to personal conflicts (NYSC, 2002). Some have argued against the fact that school subjects have no bearing on the country socio–economic and political spheres, and as such against separation of disciplines and in favour of the unity of knowledge. To this group, subject matter should be drawn on the basis of problems of the society cutting across traditional subjects with the hope of achieving integration (Mezieobi and Domike, 1996).

In Nigeria, the National Curriculum Conference held in 1969 in Lagos brought a change in the educational development of the country. It provided the nation with a new educational foundation. It also brought about new ideas of an integrated curriculum (Okumbor, 1988). There was the need to improve and reform the curriculum or individual subjects at all levels of education. It is however significant that what our children learn in school should be related to Nigeria's own problems and needs. Efforts have been made to bring disciplines together; hence there are subjects such as Integrated Science, Citizenship Education, Moral Education and Social Studies. These integrated bodies of knowledge have significant role to play in the life of our nation.

The introduction of Social Studies in Nigeria has its history and purpose. The importance of the acquisition and development of positive attitude in Social Studies as a discipline has been realised, hence, its inclusion into the curriculum at all levels of learning from primary, secondary and tertiary in the country. Social Studies has come to be seen as a discipline which emphasizes the process of identifying and solving problems for the survival of man which also includes the ability to maintain peace, an orderly, decent and progressive life (NTI, 2000). Thus, the importance of Social Studies as an instrument for conflict management and peace cannot be over emphasised. A close examination of the National Objectives as set out in the National Policy on Education showed the contributions of Social Studies towards achieving unity, integration and mutual co-existence (Osakwe and Itedjere, 1993).

Concepts are simply ideas, which are abstract. They are abstract ideas or mental symbols, typically associated with a corresponding representation in language or symbology, that denotes all of the objects in a given category or class of entities, interactions, phenomena, or relationship between them. They are generalizations, abstract and ways of classifying similar things (Seibert, 2003). They are central to the study of Social Studies as a discipline. (Ogunlade, 2005).

The issue of conflict management is of serious concern to the Nigerian nation and its people, because it brings about positive social change and understanding of the community, and the country at large. Conflict management implies intervention in a conflict situation in such way as to contain it. It is what is done when one identifies and deals with conflict in a reasonable manner through the use of skills such as effective

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communication, negotiation and problem solving so as to bring about development, peace and progress. Thus, it is the act of transforming violent conflict into one that is less damaging or seek solutions that can check conflict escalation. As people interact in groups, agreement and disagreement may occur because of differences in interest. As interaction takes place in the family level, home level, and school level, if there is disagreement there will be conflict. Hence, there is peace and conflict at the family level, at the village level, town, or city levels, at the State level, the national and international levels (NTI, 2000). The Warri, Urhobo–Itsekiri, Ijaw–Itsekiri and so on, crisis occurred because of disagreement between the parties involved. Cases of conflicts abound between States and communities in areas of boundary disputes, within the family, between husband and wife, father and children, mother and children, etc. Although absolute peace is almost impossible, but effort must be made to achieve some element or measure of relative peace within the society (Asaju, 2000).

Purpose of the Study

1.   To find out Social Studies teachers perception of the use of Social Studies concepts in conflict management.
2.   To help establish the relationship that exists in teachers' perception of the use of Social Studies concept in conflict management with regard to sex, qualification, and experience.

Research Question/ Hypotheses

Based on the need to find out Social Studies teachers perception of the use of Social Studies concepts in conflict management, the following research question and hypotheses were formulated:

R.Q.: Is there any relationship between Social Studies concepts and conflict management?

HO1: There will be no significant difference between male and female Social Studies teachers' perception of the use of Social Studies concepts of unity in conflict management.

HO2: There will be no significant difference between experienced and less experienced Social Studies teachers perception of the use of Social Studies concepts of co-operation in conflict management.

HO3: There will be no significant difference between the perceptions of graduate and non-graduate Social Studies teachers' perception of the use of Social Studies concepts in conflict management.

Previous Research

Olafare (2001) to investigate the attitude of students' Social Studies concepts in some selected secondary schools in Lagos State, the findings revealed that students' perception of Social Studies concept was positive, for they considered the discipline of Social Studies lucrative and important. It also showed that the responses were not based on gender.

Osang (1990) in his effort tested the relationship between students' performance in mathematics and self-concept. He found out that students' performance in mathematics depended on their mathematics self concept, that is, their achievement in mathematics depended on what they thought of about themselves with references to mathematics as a subject.

Anu (2000) shows that Social Studies teachers in their perception of the use of Social Studies concept in conflict management accepted that Social Studies concepts no doubt could be used to manage conflict. Abdulaziz and Nathan (2001) also found out that Social Studies teachers in most Nigerian schools are disposed to the use of Social Studies concept in conflict management. The teachers' acceptance cuts across gender (males and females). Whether this is true of Delta State Social Studies teachers was the focus of this study.

On his part, Zeidner (1998) researched into the degree of concept of co-variation between attitude and test performance. Analysis of the data with respect to their different levels of attitude and the responses of respondents was not affected by qualification, sex and experiences.

Magagula (2004) observed in his study on the role of African High Education in conflict management that African universities contributes to conflict prevention and management by creating institutions or centres for peace education studies that among other things provide academic and professional programmes and course and civic education (Social Studies).

Alade, (1998) revealed that Social Studies teachers in their perception of the use of Social Studies concept in conflict management did not differ on the basis of gender, teaching experience, and teaching qualifications. Thus, Social Studies teachers have recognised the role of use of Social Studies concepts in conflict management. Social Studies teachers have harnessed the great importance and roles of Social Studies concepts for the good of the society. In Nigeria, however, use of Social Studies concept in conflict management has not received much emphasis and attention, hence this study. Olagunju (1997) stated that the technical aspect of conflict management has come to be emphasised above human development aspects of it in the practice of industrial relations in Nigeria. And that conflict is rooted deep in Nigeria industries. Whether the situation in the use of Social Studies concept in conflict management is the same was also part of the concern of this study.

Oladepo and Ogbeide (1994) studied to assess the concept of HIV/AIDS as correlate of attitude towards HIV infected students among university undergraduate students in South-western Nigeria; the findings revealed that the perception of the respondents was adequate but was not affected by age, sex and experiences.

Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. It sought to elicit the opinions of Social Studies teachers on the use of Social Studies concepts in conflict management. The study area was Sapele Local Government Area with sixteen public secondary schools. The population consisted of 489 teachers. The stratification sampling technique was used for the study, that is, all the public secondary schools in Sapele Local Government Area were grouped into strata made up of three categories. These were Boys' secondary schools, Girls' secondary schools and mixed secondary schools. Social Studies teachers from these secondary schools were made to provide answers to the questions to the Teacher-Made-Test.

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents According to Teacher Characteristics Used in the Study

S/N	TEACHERS CHARACTERISTICS	GROUP	FREQUENCY	%
1	Gender	1. Males	9	29
		2. Females	22	71
2	Teaching Experience	1. Less Experienced	23	74
		2. Experienced	8	26
3	Qualification	1. Graduate	14	45.2
		2. Non-graduate	17	54.8
			31	100

Experienced- 10 years and above

Less Experienced- 0-9 years

Non-graduate- At least Nigeria Certificate in Education

The data collection instrument was the teacher-made test. The instrument consisted of two sections, section 'A' and 'B'. Section 'A' contained personal information of the respondent. This was to find out the age, sex, school, experience and qualification. Section 'B' consisted of twenty (20) questions based on the use of Social Studies concepts in conflict management. The respondents were required to tick their answers from options A-D. The answers were scored as follows: correct answer five (5) marks, and incorrect answer Zero 0. On the whole, each question carried five (5) marks. All those whose answers were correct were regarded as affirmative responses, while those whose responses are incorrect were regarded as negative. The instrument had a reliability coefficient of 0.88. The statistical tool used for the computing and analysing the response score was percentages as a measure of association as well as the t-test. All tests were carried out at the 0.05 level of significance.

Table 2 Independent T-Test Analyses of Effect of Social Studies Teachers' Gender, Experience and Qualification Social Studies Teachers' Perception on the Use of Social Studies Concepts In Conflict Management

S/N	VARIABLES	GROUP	NO	$\overline{X}$	SD	DF	T. VALUE
1	Perception with respect to gender	1. Males	9	66.6	11.7	30	
		2. Females	22	68.6	18.7		1.30
2	Perception with respect to Teaching Experience	1.Experienced	8	73.1	6.5	30	1.37
		2.Less Experienced	23	73.5	9.2		
3	Perception with respect to Qualification	1. Graduate	14	76.1	7.7		
		2. Non-graduate	17	76.1	7.3	30	1.41

$p < 0.05$ (critical t-value= 2.04)

Table 2 the analysis and result of the three hypotheses. For Ho1, the result of the t-test for the difference in male and female opinion of the use of Social Studies concept of unity in conflict management is not significant. The result showed that sex did not influence teachers' perceptions of the use of Social Studies concepts in conflict management, hence the retention of Ho1. This agrees with Idorenyin (1998), Joshua (1998) and Korabik, Baril and Watson, (1993). From the above findings and the result of the hypothesis on sex, difference in sex will not affect the perception of Social Studies teachers in the use of Social Studies concepts of in conflict management.

For Ho2 teachers' experience was found not to have significant difference on Social Studies teachers' view of the use of Social Studies concept of co-operation in conflict management, hence the retention of Ho2. It also revealed that the role of Social Studies teacher in the use of Social Studies concepts is very important and experience difference will not affect this role greatly. This is truism because quality teaching is seen as a challenge to the less experienced as well as the more experienced Social Studies teachers. It is only through the use of concepts that the teaching of Social Studies can have meaning.

For Ho3, the result showed that qualification was found not to have significant difference on Social Studies teachers' view of the use of Social Studies concept of in

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conflict management, therefore Ho3 was accepted. The mean score of graduate and non-graduate Social Studies teachers showed a difference of 1.4. This does not show a large difference. This is not surprising because the place and role of the Social Studies teachers in the use of concepts is very important and qualification difference will not affect this role significantly. This was in agreement with Okumbor (1988), Oladepo and Ogbeide (1994).

Conclusion

This paper have been able to situate or relate what could be referred to as Social Studies concepts to conflict management in Nigeria by looking at such factors as concept, conflict, conflict management, unity honesty and tolerance. From this background, it is therefore important to conclude that Social Studies concept should be able to take its rightful place as a tool for conflict management in Nigeria through the recognition of the fact that it is a subject with its integrated nature and concept serve as a ready tool for conflict management in Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. The study recommended that desirable Social Studies concepts such as unity, honesty, co-operation, love, peace, tolerance, and patriotism should be encouraged by Social Studies teachers among students.
2. Social Studies teachers should be encouraged to make use of desirable concepts and generalizations in the teaching and learning of Social Studies.
3. The content of Social Studies should include the study of national and international conflicts and its effects on human population.
4. The government and school administrators should show more interest in the teaching of Social Studies as a viable discipline that can help reduce or eradicate conflicts in our society and Delta State in particular by providing the necessary facilities and materials for the teaching and learning of the subject.
5. Conflict and conflict management should be introduced as a course in Social Studies Education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The lesson learnt from such studies, may help to reduce tension and to prevent and manage conflict.
6. Wider and adequate recognition should be given to Social Studies as other Social sciences and Science subjects in conflict management.
7. Competitions in Social Studies should be held regularly as it is done in science, and other related subjects.
8. The government should organise workshops, seminars, conferences, and in-service training for Social Studies teachers on Social Studies concepts, concepts formation and the use of desirable generalizations that will help- bring about peaceful co-existence.

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