

A SURVEY ON THINKING STYLES AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF UPPER BASIC EDUCATION LEVEL SCHOOLS' STUDENTS IN SOCIAL STUDIES

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Abstract

This research determines the connection between thinking styles and academic achievement of upper basic education level (former Junior Secondary School) schools' students in Social Studies in Ika North East Local Government area of Delta State. Three (3) research questions and three (3) hypotheses guided the study. The research design for this research was a correlational design. The sample of the study was two hundred and forty one (241) upper basic education level schools' students. Two instruments were used for data collection which includes: Social Studies Students' Thinking Styles Questionnaire (SSSTSQ) and Students' Achievement in Social Studies Basic Examination (SASSBE). SSSTSQ has a reliability coefficient of 0.78 whereas SASSBE was standardized and adopted from Delta State Ministry of Education. The instruments were validated by specialists from Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka. Data collected were analyzed using correlational statistics. The findings of the study were that: legislative thinking style has a strong relationship with Social Studies achievement of students. This is because social studies teaching and learning exposes the students to citizens' obligations, rights and privileges. Also, executive thinking style has a moderate relationship with Social Studies achievement of students. This is because social studies teaches students the strategies for effective leadership and followership. Furthermore, judicial thinking style has a low relationship with social studies achievement of students. This is because not every student is interested in effective ways of resolving conflicts. From the findings, it was recommended that social studies teachers should endeavour to dictate upper basic education level schools' students' thinking styles through their performances in social studies and other subjects; social studies teachers should advise parents to motivate and encourage their wards into selecting careers that align with their dispositions and so on.

Keywords: Thinking style, legislative, executive, judiciary, academic achievement and social studies

Introduction

Social studies is a core subject in upper basic education level schools (former Junior Secondary Schools). For this reason, the teaching and learning of social studies have been given some priority attention even though most social studies teachers are social studies educators (not professionally trained social studies teachers) (Mezieobi & Mezieobi, 2021). Social studies educationists (that is professionally trained social studies teachers) are few in the social studies classrooms because of the inability of schools to engage their services. In contemporary times, due to paucity of funds to engage the services of subject teachers, schools resort to using available teachers in teaching most subjects, hence cases of economics teachers teaching social studies abound (Ezegbe, 2014). In Nigerian context, two broad views could be deduced from the multiplicities of definitions of Social Studies as indicated by Ezegbe (2015). First, Social Studies was seen as consisting of various social science subjects in their separate state. These social science subjects include Geography, History, Religion Studies, Economics, Commerce, Political Science, Government, Sociology, Anthropology and so on. Second, Social Studies as an integrated subject draws its concepts, contents, methods and generalizations from the various social science subjects and humanities (Mezieobi & Abdulkareem, 2017). In the light of these two views the second view of social studies being an integrated subject has been adopted. The objectives of Nigerian social studies is developed to reflect this philosophy and lay great emphasis in equipping Nigerian citizens with appropriate and relevant skills, competencies and values which are employable to enable them contribute their quota to national development. The focus of social studies is essentially man, the society and the environment and its ultimate

is to equip individuals with knowledge and understanding for effective citizenships and living (Iwuamadi, 2021) This type of programme enables learners to solve various complex problems which confront them daily as individuals and as members of social group or society. It therefore offers a richer preparation for life.

The philosophy behind the teaching of Social Studies in our schools is that it is seen as one of the avenues for the production of effective citizens and of forging a cohesive society that will support a notion of nation building within the context of Nigeria as a democracy. Furthermore, Social Studies aim at producing students who are patriotic, responsible and useful members of the society who will contribute their own quota to the development of the nation. Nigeria is a pluralized country with an estimated 700+ ethnic languages and variations of ethnic and religious affiliations. Because of this existing ethnic and religious diversity, differences and misunderstandings sometimes arise along the lines of different ethnic and religious boundaries (Mezieobi, Oyesikun & Abdulsalam, 2020). This has often led to tribal wars, religious conflicts, political instability, economic meltdown, youth restiveness, youth militancy etc. All these go a long way to limit the development of the nation. Therefore, there is need to re-establish and promote good human understanding and relationship among the peoples of the country. It is believed that this could be achieved through a broad based subject that would give proper information about various people of the country. The general objectives of Social Studies are to prepare students for a useful life so that they can be responsive and responsible members of their immediate communities and good citizen to their nations. Hence, according to NERDC (2007: 69), general objectives of social studies include among others, to

1. To train Nigerians to be good citizen and nation builders.
2. To help students develop skills, habits and positive attitudes to one another and towards the nation.
3. To enable Nigerians know and use resources of their physical environment effectively.
4. To make people appreciate their culture and that of other Nigerians so as to appreciate the differences and the need to live together in one great nation.
5. To help develop a good sense of judgment a sense of moral and social responsibilities so that they can become useful members not destroyers of their societies and the nation.
6. To develop in learners attitude of togetherness, comradeship and cooperation towards a healthy nation.

The above objectives show that social studies is a subject meant to prepare the learner to acquire positive knowledge, attitudes, skills and competencies as he interacts with his environment that will equip him to take meaningful decisions that are useful to himself and the Nigerian nation.

Social studies is an education-based subject because it helps in enhancing students' thinking styles in relation with their experiences and exposures in their environment. Therefore, education in its conception is a form of learning in which knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes are transferred from one person to the other and from one generation to the next through training, teaching and research. Education takes an important position in the overall development of a nation because its products are molded in behaviour, attitude and skills acquisition (Okwara-Kalu, 2023). Acknowledging the importance of education in nation building, the federal government through the National Policy in Education (2014) defined the process of education as one geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national, efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness and national unity. Other outcomes supported by education process are, social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technical progress. In recognition of the role of social studies education towards nation building, it is assumed that an educated person should be equipped with coherent attitude and good behaviour toward national development (Kampylis & Berki, 2014; Mezieobi & Mezieobi, 2021). Such an educated individual shall also have skills in any chosen field including in social studies. The integration of these three concepts: attitude, behaviour and skills (academic achievement) would produce a fully developed Nigerian child ready to contribute to the nation's development quest. Based on Njoku (2014), evaluation on recent trends explained in the published results of senior secondary school certificate examination, there is high level of examination malpractice and high rate of drop-outs of both male and female students in secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The benefits of education seemed to be eluding Nigerians. According to Amadi (2012), Kalu (2017) and Adeyemi&Oladele (2020) the general performance of candidates in

national examinations is abysmally poor. Nwake (2012) is of similar opinion that the standard of education in Nigeria is dwindling resulting in doubts whether the millennium goals of affordable education for all will be a reality in Nigeria. Reporting further on the problems bedeviling Nigeria education, Eke (2014) asserts that examination malpractice amongst Nigeria students is a behaviour problem.

In the teaching and learning of social studies, the emphasis on thinking styles has to do with students' behaviour(s). Behaviour is one very important aspect of educational outcome that must not be ignored and the Nigerian child cannot be said to have fully developed into a responsible citizen if he/she is a product of cheating in examination (Eke, 2014). The Nigerian child of today therefore has failed in content of character, attitude to achieving success in life and development of quality skills for creativity (Okwara-Kalu, 2023). This statement suggests that quality educational outcomes expressed in developed thinking skills have eluded the Nigerian child. Urgent steps are therefore needed to determine the immediate and remote causes for educational innovation. Where then does the problem of poor academic achievement among Nigerian students especially in social studies lie? Rightly put, Wool (2021) asserts that most problems in academic achievement of most students in social studies stem from information processing strategy and thinking styles.

The main goal of education is to help children learn how to think alright so that they can construct their own meaning. Education helps in creating people who are capable of doing new things not simply repeating what other generations have done. Decisions are made through rigorous thinking hence, it is a fact that students must be taught these skills for proper functioning in the society. According to Amadi and Orluwene (2012), social studies teachers should evaluate formatively whether the problem of students lie in poor thinking abilities, styles, learning styles or because they simply have not learned the basic facts. It is pertinent according to Adeyemi and Oladele (2020) for social studies teachers to determine how students in social studies classrooms solve the problems they are presented with. This is by determining the kind of logic they use in solving problems and whether they suggest solutions systematically or by guessing and forgetting what they have already tried. Against this backdrop it is plausible to predict educational outcomes from students thinking styles in social studies classrooms.

The teaching and learning of social studies in upper basic education level schools entail reflective and rational thinking. Thinking is one of the essential aspects of human behaviour. Thinking is a tool needed in social studies learning and it supports educational application greatly. Thinking provides the basis on which cognition functions can be applied in problem solving especially in the social studies classroom. Campell (2021) noted that thinking is a mental activity where behaviour is often implicit and hidden in which symbols such as images, ideas and concepts are ordinarily employed. Thinking leads to intellectual activities such as decision making, formulation of hypothesis in research exercises, posing research questions, evaluating information and even making inferences from data collected. Thinking requires systematic and skillful operations. It involves understanding the subject matter adequately, having insight and knowledge which will in turn affect achievement of students in social studies. When social studies students are confronted with difficulty in education task because of poor thinking skills or problem solving strategies, everything from educational outcome to self-esteem suffers. Thinking improves social studies students' problem solving abilities and social studies students who feel confident in analyzing and confronting problems are well on their way to functioning effectively in the society. Harris (2014) in agreement opined that people think differently, leading to thinking styles. In the social studies classroom, it is believed that thinking styles originated from neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), which was originally developed as a behavioural model or system of thought suggesting that people organize, edit and construct individual models of the world from the information that they receive through senses. Thinking styles, measure the mental processes which influence ways in which our experiences are sorted and represented internally. Thinking styles therefore is a measure of intellectual functioning since it determines how one reacts to problems (Mahamawaw, Mensah, Acheampong and Marfor, 2019). In social studies, research has shown that certain thinking styles correlate different levels of academic achievement in upper basic education level schools. People differ in thinking styles irrespective of their abilities, hence, thinking style according to mental self-government theory resides at the interface between ability levels and personality. The theory departmentalized five major domains of thinking styles into: functions, forms, levels, scope and learning. Under function, domain which this study is delimited to, thinking departments of learners are categorized into: legislative, executive and judicial components (Okwara-Kalu, 2023).

In social studies, domains of thinking that support academic tasks are still under scrutiny. This is because of the differing opinions of various psychologists and some environmental factors. While some researchers claim that legislative style of thinking promote creativity, formulation, abstract imagination and planning, researchers such as Orluwene and Amadi (2012) disagreed. Sternberg (2012) arrogating novelty and innovation to legislative thinking asserts that students who prefer sciences, and in arts writing poems creating novel stories, composing music and creating original art works are legislative inclined. In the same vein, Kane (2015) explored the inclination of executive thinkers and concluded that they are: concerned with implementing and doing tasks within a set of guidelines. They are procedural in nature hence like pursuing activities structured by others. The judicial style of thinking is concerned with thinking, evaluating and comparing. They like to judge the product of other activities. Examples are students who like evaluating the idea of others, formulating or implementing them. Most students because of ignorance, do not consider the nature of their thinking in career pursuit. Thinking is innate, fundamental and an input in task accomplishment. It is therefore very important to ascertain whether there is any relationship between thinking style and academic achievement of social studies students in upper basic education level schools.

Social studies teaching and learning involve intelligent approaches to things that are related to man in his environment. Intelligence for the social studies teachers and students has become the defining index in rating the performance of social studies students in school tasks. The concept that one's thinking style may result in good or poor achievement in academic tasks is not popular because of paucity of empirical backup. Educationists and psychologists are continually investigating whether nature or nurture decides the direction of individuals in life. The finding of this study, innate disposition such as thinking styles has an association with academic achievement of students in social studies. Its findings will further serve as a template to researchers and a stepping stone to determining variables other than intelligence that promote academic achievement of students in upper basic education level schools.

Upper basic education level school is the former junior secondary school (JSS), that level of education that a student goes through before senior secondary education. The ultimate objective of upper basic education level school is to transform students by providing: knowledge, skills, character and virtues. Social studies students with various intellectual abilities from multicultural and varied socioeconomic background deserve to be assisted in understanding the best strategy to adopt for quality educational outcome. The present downtrend in academic performance of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies as reported by researchers demands asking the following questions: How could upper basic education level schools ensure that students regardless of their intellectual abilities learn, become useful and productive members of the society? How could students be motivated to learn correctly? What innate variables pre-dispose upper basic education level schools' students to good academic achievement? (Otolehi, Okwara-Kalu and Agulanna, 2022; Mezieobi, 2020). The above questions desire answers which the findings of this research will attempt. Therefore, this study surveys thinking styles and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between thinking styles and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students. Specifically the study seeks to:

1. Determine the relationship between legislative thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies;
2. Ascertain the relationship between executive thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies; and
3. Find out the relationship between judicial thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' student in social studies.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study. They are

1. What is the relationship between legislative thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies?
2. What is the relationship between executive thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies?
3. What is the relationship between judicial thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies?

Hypotheses

Based on the research questions above, the following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between legislative thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies;
2. There is no significant relationship between executive thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies; and
3. There is no significant relationship between judicial thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies.

Methodology

This research adopted a correlational survey design. The design was selected because the study sought to determine the association coefficient between two variables. The population of the study was 4820 male and female upper basic education level schools' students Ika North East Local Government Area of Delta State. The sample of the study was two hundred and forty one (241) upper basic education level schools' students. Two instruments were used for data collection which includes: Social Studies Students' Thinking Styles Questionnaire (SSSTSQ) and Students' Achievement in Social Studies Basic Examination (SASSBE). Social Studies Students' Thinking Style Questionnaire (SSSTSQ) was divided into four sections namely: Section A for upper basic education level schools' students Bio-data; Section B is a ten questions items on legislative thinking style (LTS). Section C is a ten question items on executive thinking style (ETS) while section D is another ten items question on judicial thinking style (JTS). The response pattern is adopted from likert scale format of Strong Agree SA; (+4); Agree A; (+3); Disagree D; (+2) and Strongly Disagree SD; (+1) weighed responses are summed and divided by the number of items to obtain the required mean score. Similarly the forty multiple objective choice questions (MOCQ) have a ceiling mark of 100% giving any correct question 2.5 marks. The reliability coefficient of Social Studies Students' Thinking Style Questionnaire (STSQ) was 0.78 as determined by Sternberg (1997) who originally constructed the instrument. The forty multiple objective choice test (MOCQ) was adopted from the basic certificate examination originally organized by Delta State Ministry of Education for UBELS three final year students. It is an examination that marked the end of the basic nine years of education. The reliability is therefore guaranteed. SSSTSQ has a reliability coefficient of 0.78 whereas SASSBE was standardized and adopted from Delta State Ministry of Education. The instruments were validated by specialists from Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka. Data collected were analyzed using correlational statistics.

Results

The results of the study are presented below:

Question 1: What is the relationship between legislative thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies?

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between legislative thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies.

Table 1: Pearson r and t-test of significance of simple linear correlation on the relationship between legislative thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies in Ika North East Local Government Area of Delta State.

n	R	O.C.	df	t _{cal}	t _{tab}	Decision
241	0.62	0.05	240	7.56	1.960	Reject Ho ₁

Correlation is significant at 0.05 (2-tailed)

Table 1 revealed that the relationship between legislative thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies has a strong coefficient (0.62). The strength of the relationship was determined to be significant when subjected to a t-test.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between executive thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies?

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between executive thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies.

Table 2: Pearson r and t-test of significant of simple linear correlation on the relationship between executive thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies.

n	R	O.C.	df	t _{cal}	t _{tab}	Decision
241	0.74	0.05	240	8.23	1.960	Reject Ho ₂

Correlation is significant at 0.05 (2-tailed)

Table 2 revealed a strong relationship between executive thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies in Ika North East Local Government Area of Delta State. The strength of the relationship was subjected to a t-test and was found to be significant at 0.05 confidence level.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between judicial thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies?

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between judicial thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies.

Table 3: Pearson r and t-test of significance of simple linear correlation on the relationship between judiciary thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies

N	R	O.C.	df	t _{cal}	t _{tab}	Decision
241	0.59	0.05	240	6.21	1.960	Reject Ho ₃

Correlation is significant at 0.05 (2-tailed)

Table 3 revealed that the relationship between judicial thinking style and academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies was moderate and positive. This shows that the association has a linear representation. The coefficient was subjected to a t-test and it was determined to be significant at 0.05 level of confidence.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the study was that legislative thinking of style was a strong relationship with academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies. This result means that thinking style could influence upper basic education level schools' student's performance in educational tasks related to social studies. Legislative thinking style therefore compliments other strategies that encourage quality educational outcome. The reasons for these findings are two folds: legislative thinking style is independent, innovative, investigative and progressive. It tends to inspire and encourage novelty more strategically in social science subjects where outcomes/results justify processes. The subject matter used in testing participants achievement based on their varied thinking style was social studies which is a combination of concrete/abstract oriented. The finding of the present study is in agreement with Okwara-Kalu (2014) and Mezieobi (2021) study. The finding was also supported by Nwosu (2017) and Agulanna and Onukogu (2012). In contrast, proponents of intelligence as the only yardstick to measure educational outcome such as Njoku (2014) had an opposing result.

Also, the finding of the study was that executive thinking style had a moderate relationship with academic achievement of upper basic education level schools' students in social studies. The result of the study suggests that upper basic education level schools' students with executive thinking style have moderate performance in academic tasks (achievement test) related to social studies. The reason for this result is that upper basic education level schools' students who are executive inclined in thinking tend to give approval to discoveries after thorough examination and evaluation. This deductive style in learning

tilts more toward concepts rather than abstract subjects. The subject with which participants achievement were tested was abstracted oriented (social studies). This might have contributed to their moderate performance. The result of the present research was supported by Orluwene and Amadi (2012). Similar support was received from Kane (2015) study that assigned moderate performance in educational tasks to upper basic education level schools' students who are reflective when studying.

The result of the study was that judicial thinking style has a moderate relationship with upper basic education level schools' students' academic achievement in social studies. This result means that judicial thinking moderately influences performance in Educational tasks related to social studies. The reason for this result was that upper basic education level schools' students inclined to judicial thinking interpret existing rules, principles and concepts in learning. They are not innovative rather procedural. Their inclination operates on what is already existing rather than abstract variables such as social studies. The present study was supported by the findings of Njoku (2014) whose study on sex difference in social studies achievement of junior secondary school students in Imo State revealed that abstract inclination of social studies favoured innovative thinkers. A contrasting view was obtained by Ekwuru (2015) whose result asserts that resilience rather than disposition of junior secondary schools' students impacted in academic achievement.

Conclusion

Thinking styles of students strategically impacts on their academic achievement in the various subjects. The result of the study has obvious educational implication for upper basic education level schools' students in particular and secondary schools' students in general. Thinking styles from the findings of the present research champion upper basic education level schools' students' academic compass. It also decides which subject a student is likely to adopt while legislative thinking style favoured social science oriented students, executive and judicial depend on tangible variables and existing principles. Judicial thinkers therefore will make good lawyers while executive thinkers will become good politicians. Further studies on thinking styles should be directed toward career selection to enable round pigs fit in round holes. The findings of this study would encourage proper career selection among upper basic education level schools students when it is time for them to choose subjects in senior secondary school for future admission into the university.

Recommendations

From the findings of the present research, the following recommendations are apt:

1. Social studies teachers should endeavour to dictate upper basic education level schools' students' thinking styles through their performances in social studies and other subjects.
2. Social studies teachers should advise parents to motivate and encourage their wards into selecting careers that align with their dispositions. Parents can achieve this through incentives to their children, registering their children in extra mural classes, teaching their children at home by themselves, monitoring their children's activities in school and at home and so on.
3. The schools should encourage students to be unique in various ways as to distinguish themselves in the wider society.
4. The government should encourage the schools, schools' leadership and teachers to be committed to discovering students through their thinking styles.

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