

EFFECTS OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING ON STUDENTS' INTEREST AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SOCIAL STUDIES IN KATSINA-ALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF BENUE STATE

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines effects of collaborative learning on students' interest and academic performance in Social Studies in Katsina-Ala Local Government of Benue State . The study was guided by two research questions. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The study employed quasi-experimental design. The population of the study comprised 5,258 Upper Basic II students from Katsina-Ala Local Government in Benue State comprising 3,210 male and 2,048 female students, out of which 215 students comprising 113 male and 102 female Upper Basic II students was used for the study. Social Studies Performance Test (SSPT) and Social Studies Interest Questionnaire (SSIQ) developed by the researcher were used for data collection. SSPT consists of Sections A and B. Section A sought bio data of the respondents, while section B has 40 multiple choice items with options lettered A – D. Topics covered are culture, marriage, family and drug abuse from Upper Basic II Social Studies curriculum. SSIQ is also made up of sections A and B. Section A sought bio data of the respondents like gender while section B has 20 items on interest with response options ranging from very high (4 points), high (3 points), low (2 points) and very low (1 point) for positive items; but however in reverse order for negative items. Mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there is significant difference in the mean interest ratings of students taught Social Studies using collaborative learning approach and those taught using conventional approach. Finally, there is significant difference in the mean performance scores of students taught Social Studies using collaborative learning approach and those taught using conventional approach at Upper Basic II Education level. It was recommended among others that Social Studies teachers should use collaborative approach to ensure effective teaching and learning so as to enhance students' interest and performance in Social Studies instead of the conventional approach..

Keywords: Social Studies, Collaborative learning, students' interest and academic performance.

INTRODUCTION

Social Studies is one of the disciplines offered in Upper Basic schools today. Social studies examine a wide range of human experience. Over the years, academics have given social studies various definitions. According to Samad & Rashari (2022), social studies is a course of study that a society utilizes to impart to students (learners), the knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and behaviors it deems crucial for understanding how people relate with one another, their environment, and themselves. Social Studies is a discipline aimed at achieving the national goals of education in Nigeria, which are national unity, national consciousness, self-reliance, and national rehabilitation by inculcating positive values, concepts, beliefs ideology in learners, helping them in the needed behavioral changes. It focused in preparing Nigerian youngsters to become decent citizens capable of contributing significantly to national progress between man and his environment. In recognition of its importance, the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 2013 made Social Studies a compulsory subject both at primary school level and junior secondary school level.

Social Studies draw its concepts from multiple disciplines within the social sciences and humanities at the primary and secondary levels of education such as History, Government, Economics and Religion. Social Studies is a crucial subject that helps students understand the world they live in. It covers history, geography, civics, economics, and culture, shaping well-rounded individuals who can contribute positively to society. It teaches students about their rights, responsibilities, and the importance of participating in society. Professions like law, journalism, public administration, and teaching require strong social studies skills. A good grasp of the subject helps students address and respond to global challenges like climate change and social justice. By excelling in Social Studies, students not only improve academically but also become responsible citizens who contribute to a better society. It is against this backdrop that it became imperative to carry out a study on the effect of collaborative learning approach on students' interest and academic performance in Social Studies in Katsina-Ala Local Government in Benue State

Statement of the problem

Social studies play an important role in instilling positive values, attitudes, and social skills in citizens, as well as presenting appropriate solutions to the country's social problems. Unfortunately, evidence from the literature suggests both male and female

students' enthusiasm and performance in the subject have been poor.

This lack of student enthusiasm and performance in the subject has been attributed to the employment of a flawed teacher-centered teaching strategy, which only provides learners with passive learning experiences. The search for an effective teaching approach that may engender high performance and interest in Social Studies has become vital as learners' performance and interest in the subject decline, regardless of gender.

Contemporary teaching approaches promote the use of learner-centered and engaging teaching and learning approaches, such as collaborative learning, which involves the collective sharing of ideas when learners are exposed to learning activities. According to the researcher's personal observations based on literature data, there are few studies on the effects of collaborative learning on students' interest and performance in Social Studies in the studied region. Again, there is no consensus in research reports on the effect of collaborative learning on interest and performance of students in Social Studies based on gender. The conflicting nature of the research reports necessitated this study which is set to determine the effects of collaborative learning on students' interest and academic performance in Social Studies in Katsina-Ala Local Government in Benue State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

1. determined the difference in the interest ratings of students taught Social Studies using collaborative learning approach and those taught using conventional approach;
2. compared the difference between the performance of students taught Social Studies using collaborative learning approach and those taught using conventional approach

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the difference in the mean interest ratings of students taught Social Studies using collaborative learning approach and those taught using conventional approach?
2. What is the difference in the mean performance scores of students taught Social Studies using collaborative learning approach and those taught using conventional approach?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated and tested for the study:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean interest ratings of students taught Social Studies using collaborative learning approach and those taught using conventional approach
2. There is no significant difference between the mean performance scores of students taught Social Studies using collaborative learning approach and those taught using conventional approach.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

Collaborative learning, in which students work together to solve problems and complete tasks, has been found to improve engagement and performance, particularly when using approaches such as peer discussions and group problem solving. This approach fosters positive interdependence, with students' success depending on group collaboration and individual accountability, ensuring that all members contribute actively. Such participation not only improves knowledge retention, but it also encourages skills such as critical thinking and communication, both of which are important in social studies.

Collaborative learning is an educational approach where students work together in groups to achieve shared learning goals. Rather than focusing solely on individual achievement, collaborative learning emphasizes interaction and mutual support to build understanding and solve problems. This approach encourages students to actively engage with each other's ideas, share insights, and learn from diverse perspectives. According to Johnson & Johnson (2017), a key feature is positive interdependence, where each member's success is linked to the group's success, fostering a sense of responsibility and teamwork. In collaborative learning, students often engage in activities such as discussions, debates, peer teaching, and group projects. These activities require students to develop and practice social skills like communication, empathy, and conflict resolution. Collaborative learning also includes individual accountability, which ensures that each participant contributes to the group's objectives, mitigating "social loafing" (when some students rely on others' efforts).

One's interests are the activities he/she enjoys doing as well as subjects him/her would like to spend time learning about. Interest is an important variable in learning because when one becomes interested in an activity, one is likely to become more deeply involved in that activity. According to Akinbobola (2016), interest is a subjective feeling of concentration or curiosity over something. People

work most diligently and most effectively at tasks they are genuinely interested in. Interest is a disposition an individual exhibit in a subject and it is also a psychological factor that an individual brings into his or her academic experience which will either result into high or low achievement.

Ajaja and Mezieobi (2018) described interest as a powerful motivational process that energizes learning, guides academic and career trajectories and is essential to academic success. Interest is both a psychological state of attention that affects particular object or topic and an enduring predisposition to reengage students over time. The four interest enhancing intervention seems useful in promoting interest. That is; attention-getting, contexts evoking prior individual interest, problem based learning and enhancing utility value. It is expected that promoting interest can contribute to a more engaged, motivated learning experience for students (Akinbobola, 2016).

In the today's education reform era, students' performance is key. In the opinions of Ayomi and Tokpe (2018), academic performance refers to how students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different learning tasks given to them by their teachers. Jirgba, Eriba, & Achor, (2018), maintains that successful students, learned to effectively balance the social and academic aspects of school, expect to succeed, and may be described as socially proficient, goal oriented, and intrinsically motivated. They maintained that in educational institutions, success is measured by academic performance, or how well a student meets standards set out by local government or ministry of education and the institution itself. As career competition grows ever fiercer in the working world, the importance of students doing well in school has caught the attention of parents, legislators and government education departments alike. Parents like teacher want their kids and students respectively to succeed academically. They want to see tests scores rise, with the high hopes that they can compete better against foreign counterparts. There is this craving desire for assurance that the students are getting a top-notch education measured by results and not by processes (Emaikwu, 2017).

Students performance is not simply a matter of what happens in school, although schools can and do make a significant difference. Ayomi and Tokpe (2018) maintains that students' academic performance in Social Studies can be viewed from two clear perspectives: one view point is from the criteria of the system such as the profile of students' performance in continuous assessment and terminal examinations in

school and in standardized examinations like JSSCE, SSCE, JAMB, NABTE and University examinations.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This study uses Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism as the theoretical framework to further the researchers' knowledge of developing views and issues that teaching faculty and learners confront in higher education organizations. This study was carried out to improve the investigator's understanding of emerging views and issues. Social constructivism is a communication and knowledge paradigm that focuses on how individuals interact to gain a better understanding of their surroundings. Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory (1978) emphasizes that learning is a social process where students develop knowledge through interactions with others. This theory highlights the role of social interaction, scaffolding, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in learning. Social Constructivism Theory helps students understand historical events and government functions by acting out real-life scenarios. The theory also encourages students to analyze historical events, policies, and social issues from different perspectives and promotes critical thinking and problem-solving. By integrating Vygotsky's Social Constructivism and collaborative learning, Social Studies becomes more dynamic, helping students stay motivated and perform better academically.

Applying Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivism Theory in Social Studies through collaborative learning enhances students' engagement, critical thinking, and academic performance. By leveraging social interaction, scaffolding, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), students move from basic understanding to deeper knowledge with the support of teachers and peers. Collaborative learning strategies such as group discussions, debates, role-playing, and project-based learning make Social Studies more interactive and meaningful. These methods not only improve students' interest but also help them develop essential skills like problem-solving, communication, and teamwork, which are valuable beyond the classroom. Ultimately, integrating Vygotsky's principles into Social Studies fosters an environment where students actively participate in their learning, become independent thinkers, and perform better academically, preparing them to be informed and responsible citizens in society.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopts quasi-experimental design, specifically the pre-test, post-test, non-equivalent, control group design. Quasi-experimental design, according to Emaikwu (2014), involves the administration of pre and post-tests on Pre-existing group assignment. This design was particularly chosen for the study because true experimental studies cannot be conducted in an educational environment, as certain classroom situations do not allow themselves for easy randomization.

The population comprised of 5,258 Upper Basic II students from Katsina-Ala Local Government in Benue State comprising 3,210 male and 2,048 female students (Teaching Service Board Makurdi, 2023). A sample of 215 students comprising 113 male and 102 female Upper Basic II students was used for the study. Social Studies Performance Test (SSPT) and Social Studies Interest Questionnaire (SSIQ) developed by the researcher were used for data collection. SSPT consists of Sections A and B. Section A sought bio-data of the respondents like gender, while section B has 40 multiple choice items with options lettered A – D. Topics covered are culture, marriage, family and drug abuse from Upper Basic II Social Studies curriculum. SSIQ is also made up of sections A and B. Section A sought bio-data of the respondents like gender while section B has 20 items on interest with response options ranging from very high(4 points), high (3 points), low(2 points) and very low (1 point) for positive items; but however in reverse order for negative items. The respondents ticked the option that best express their level of interest.

Mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

The results of data analysis and interpretation are presented in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses that guides the study:

Research Question One: What is the difference in the mean interest ratings of students taught Social Studies using experimental Group and those taught using control group?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Interest Ratings of Students Taught Social Studies Using Collaborative and Conventional Approaches.

Approach		Pre-Interest	Post-Interest	Mean Gain
Experimental Group	Mean	1.89	3.35	1.46
	Std. Deviation	0.44	0.32	
	N	98	98	
Control Group	Mean	1.88	1.95	0.07
	Std. Deviation	0.26	0.41	
	N	117	117	
Mean Difference		0.01	1.40	1.39

Table 1 shows that students taught Social Studies using collaborate method had a mean interest level of 1.89 with a standard deviation of 0.44 at pre-test. In the post-test, the mean value is 3.35, with a standard deviation of 0.32. During the pre-test, the mean interest ratings of students taught Social Studies using Control Group were 1.88 with a standard deviation of 0.26. In the post-test, it has a mean of 1.95 and a standard deviation of 0.41. Table 1 also demonstrated that students taught Social Studies utilizing

experimental Group had a mean gain of 1.46, whereas those taught using a Control Group had a mean gain of 0.07. The Experimental group outperformed Control Group by a mean of 1.39.

Research Question Two: What is the difference in the mean performance scores of students taught Social Studies using Katsina-Ala Local Government in Benue State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Performance Test Scores of Students Taught Social Studies Using Collaborative and Conventional Approaches.

Approach		Pretest	Posttest	Mean Gain
Experimental Group	Mean	8.04	17.62	9.58
	Std. Deviation	1.60	1.39	
	N	98	98	
Control Group	Mean	6.99	10.72	3.73
	Std. Deviation	1.49	1.57	
	N	117	117	
Mean difference		1.05	6.90	5.85

Data from table 2 shows that the mean performance score of students taught Social Studies utilizing experimental Group was 8.04 with a standard deviation of 1.60 in the pretest. In the post-test, the mean is 17.62 with a standard deviation of 1.39. During the pre-test, the mean performance scores of students taught Social Studies using control Group were 6.99 with a standard deviation of 1.49. In the posttest, the mean is 10.72, with a standard deviation of 1.57. Table 2 also shows that students taught Social

Studies in experimental Group had a mean increase of 9.58, whereas those in control Group had a mean gain of 3.73. The mean difference between the groups is 5.85 in favor of students taught in experimental Group.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the mean interest ratings of students taught Social Studies using collaborative learning approach and those taught using conventional approach.

Table 3: ANCOVA Result of the Difference in the Mean Interest Ratings of Students Taught Social Studies Using Collaborative and Conventional Approaches.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	105.126 ^a	2	52.563	375.808	.000
Intercept	54.042	1	54.042	386.379	.000
Preinterest	.049	1	.049	.352	.553
Method	105.124	1	105.124	751.596	.000
Error	29.652	212	.140		
Total	1572.155	215			
Corrected Total	134.778	214			

a. R Squared = .780 (Adjusted R Squared = .778)

The result from table 3 reveals that $F(1,214) = 751.596$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is therefore, rejected. Thus, it implies that there is significant difference in the mean interest ratings of students taught Social Studies using collaborative learning approach and those taught using conventional approach. Thus, based on evidence from data analysis, collaborative learning approach

significantly facilitated students' interest more compared to conventional approach.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the mean performance scores of students taught Social Studies using collaborative learning approach and those taught using conventional approach.

Table 4: ANCOVA Result of the Difference in the Mean Performance Scores of Students Taught Social Studies Using Collaborative and Conventional Approaches.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2548.503 ^a	2	1274.251	578.975	.000
Intercept	1936.445	1	1936.445	879.852	.000
Pretest	6.137	1	6.137	2.789	.096
Method	2355.220	1	2355.220	1070.128	.000
Error	466.586	212	2.201		
Total	44347.000	215			
Corrected Total	3015.088	214			

Table 4 reveals that $F(1,214) = 1070.128$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that, there is significant difference in the mean performance scores of students taught Social Studies using collaborative learning approach and those taught

using conventional approach. Thus, based on evidence from data analysis, collaborative learning approach significantly enhance students' performance than conventional approach.

Discussion of Findings

This study found in the research question and hypothesis one that there is significant difference in the mean interest ratings of students taught Social Studies using collaborative learning approach and those taught using conventional approach. This finding agrees with the finding of Wise, Knight & Shum (2021) who's study found that collaborative instructional approach enhanced students' interest. Finding of this study is also consistent with Mooman, Ali & Lashari (2023) who found out that students' interest could be enhanced through the use of innovative strategies that stimulate their interest such as collaborative learning approach

Finding in the research question two further revealed that, there is significant difference in the mean performance scores of students taught Social Studies using collaborative learning approach and those taught using conventional approach. This finding is in conformity with Ariani and Variantien (2022) study, that students taught using collaborative learning approach, performed better than the group taught using conventional approach. The reason for this finding could be because, collaborative instructional approach utilizes the principle Conventional approach of learning in groups in which students actively engage in learning, interact with themselves and materials and create knowledge. Furthermore, scaffolding and guidance from the teacher stimulate deep thought processes capable of enforcing meaningful learning and improving performance.

Implications

The implications of the findings of this study is that Social Studies teachers could promote interest and performance of students by developing and stimulating students' interest in the subject through the use of collaborative learning approach. The use of collaborative learning approach will assist the teacher in providing learning environment that will be conducive for the students to actively learn.

Collaborative learning approach was effective in reducing gender gaps in students' performance in Social Studies but not interest. This implies that the regular use of collaborative learning

approach by Social Studies teachers could greatly enhance the performance of students.

Conclusion

The study concluded that collaborative approach is capable of enhancing the interest and performance of students in Social Studies. Furthermore, the findings in this study revealed that collaborative learning is efficacious in eliminating gender related differences in performance in Social Studies learning, indicating that the approach is gender friendly. Therefore, collaborative promotes the development of critical thinking through discussion, clarification of ideas and evaluation of others' ideas.

Recommendations

Based on findings of the present study, the following recommendations are outlined:

1. To increase students' interest equally, teachers should support both male and female students throughout instruction and learning by using a collaborative method.
2. Social studies teachers and supervisors should emphasize that collaborative approaches improve students' engagement and performance in comparison to traditional approaches, and as such, they should promote their use in the classroom.

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