Effects of cooperative learning on junior secondary school students’ knowledge and attitudes to multicultural education concepts in Social Studies

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge and attitudes to multicultural education concepts in Social Studies are invaluable experiences of analysing various cultures in today’s interdependent world. It increases students’ capacity for intellectual open-mindedness and global perspective about issues. Equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching strategies in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial and cultural groups. In an attempt to meet the demands of multicultural instructional strategies, instructional strategies must be centered on multicultural education concepts taking into account the historical, cultural, social and economic characteristics of Nigeria as a nation. The conventional method is the model for schools and according to research; it is not the most effective. Therefore, these call for the introduction of appropriate approaches of teaching Social Studies. A 30 item achievement test was administered to 126 junior secondary school students randomly selected from two secondary schools in the south-west region of Nigeria. Data were analysed using analysis of co-variance. The findings of this study revealed that cooperative strategy proved more effective than the conventional strategy in the teaching and learning of multicultural concepts in Social Studies. The cooperative learning strategy should therefore, be used for teaching multicultural issues and concepts in Social Studies. Keywords: Attitudes, Cooperative Learning Strategy, Knowledge, Multicultural Education, Social Studies

1. INTRODUCTION

Social Studies is primarily concerned with the study of people, their activities and relationships as they interact with their physical and socio-cultural environment. Since its emergence as a curricular area in the early 1960s, Social Studies has expanded rapidly to become a core subject offered in Nigerian schools (Adeyemi, 2005; NPE, 2004). Consequently, the subject has assumed an increasingly important role particularly in the first nine years of the country’s education system. In order for Social Studies to perform its functions effectively, instructional strategies in Social Studies must be centered on multicultural concepts due to the multicultural nature of Nigeria (Agunbiade, 2007). Multicultural education concepts in Social Studies take into account the historical, cultural, social and economic characteristics of the nation because Nigerians are people with varied languages and ethnic identities. These include a variety of issues such as equity and justice, religion, ethnicity, cooperation and conflict, peace, racism, culture and identity, civic rights and responsibility, leadership, followership, citizenship to mention just a few (NERDC and UBEC, 2007). Such concepts could foster critical thinking in learners and development in any society (Bennet, 2007; Reed and Black 2006).

Instructional environments and the ability of instructors to develop teaching strategies are germane for the transfer of knowledge, right attitude and development. Therefore, developing appropriate knowledge and right attitudes towards multicultural education concepts in Social Studies is essential for peaceful co-existence in any society. It has been postulated that with the right type of attitude and appropriate knowledge, students better understand the nature, complexity and development of the United States of America as well as societies in other nations throughout the world (Bennet, 2006; Garmon, 2004; Gay, 2004; Lee, 2006). The conventional method is the model for most schools in Nigeria. It is a teaching strategy whereby an instructor is the central focus of information transfer. Typically, an instructor will stand before a class and present information; notes are written on a board and students are expected to take such notes while listening to the lecture. However, the method is not the most effective according to Lai (2002) because it focuses entirely on intellectual and ignores experiential learning.

The question of which method yields the most possible learning is one that has been debated extensively throughout the history of education in Nigeria. In an attempt to meet the demands of learners and avoid complaints about poor performances as a result of the practice of conventional method which is the model for schools, the need for teachers to have a change of style became imperative. Research indicated that the academic achievement of students is likely to improve when cooperative teaching strategies are used in instruction (Aronson and Gonzalez, 1988). Also in studies reviewed by Yusuf (2004), one teaching strategy consistently results in both achievement and attitudinal gains, and this strategy is cooperative teaching strategy. Cooperative learning is an instructional strategy in which students work together in small, heterogeneous groups to complete a problem, project, or other instructional goal, while teachers act as guides or facilitators (Duplais, 2006; Lie, 2008; Williams, 2007). Effective teaching and learning could still be achieved through the use of an alternative pedagogy. Consequently, focus shifted to Jigsaw technique which is one of the cooperative learning methods. By its very nature students are trained to become active learners because new perspectives are shared within groups as a result of the existing variety of background knowledge.
It is remarkable that notable scholars have worked on cooperative learning strategy to effectively teach Social Studies and related subjects (Adeniyi, 2002; Amosun, 2002; Kolawole, 2007; Omosehin, 2003; Pandian, 2004; Parker, 2004; Samuel & John, 2004). The researchers have made useful contributions and generally agreed that cooperative learning strategy seem to be more useful than any other instructional strategy. However, most studies on cooperative learning did not research into the area of multiculturalism. This is germane because the diversity of peoples all over the world brings together students from many ethnicities and cultures in our classrooms. A teacher should create an educational environment that will ensure success for all students. To do this, it is essential to explore practices to facilitate learning among diverse group of learners. Therefore, this study examined effects of cooperative learning strategy on junior secondary school students’ knowledge and attitudes to multicultural concepts in Social Studies with a focus to bridge the gap between the classroom and teaching strategies. Cooperative learning is viable yet generally underutilized method of instruction at the college level. However, Paulsen and Faust noted that cooperative learning gives students the opportunity for collaborative learning.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

One of the key challenges to the effective implementation of the lofty aims and objectives of Nigerian education is the multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition of the Federation (FGN, 2008). Nigerians are people with varied languages and ethnic identities with over 400 ethnic groups consisting Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba, and Kanuri as the largest distributed among the ethnic groups. Also; in virtually every school, one is likely to find students who are not only from different ethnic groups but from a variety of racial composition and this is increasing every day. Specifically, prejudice, discrimination and lack of equal opportunity to learn are the prevailing situations in the society. Despite several efforts made by past and present governments to build a strong, united and progressive society in terms of introduction of indigenous language policy, civic education, Social Studies education to mention a few, there is still much insensitivity and indiscipline in the society. It has therefore become apparent that the conventional method which is currently the teaching approach in Nigerian schools is inappropriate and ineffective for achieving the high objectives of the Social Studies. This study, therefore, determined the effects of cooperative learning strategy on junior secondary school students’ knowledge and attitudes to multicultural education concepts in Social Studies.

2. HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were generated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H01: There is no significant main effect of treatment on students’ achievement.

H02: There is no significant main effect of gender on students’ achievement.

H03: There is no significant main effect of age on students’ achievement.

H04: There is no significant interaction effect of treatment, gender and age on achievement.

3. DESIGN

The study adopted a pretest, post-test quasi and control experimental design.

The design is represented schematically as follows:

\[ 0_1X_10 = \text{Experimental group 1} \]
\[ 0_2X_0 \text{ = Control group} \]

Where \( 0_1 \) and \( 0_2 \) are pre-test measures/observations of experimental group 1 and control respectively. \( 0_1 \) and \( 0_2 \) are the post-test measures/observations of experimental group 1 and control respectively.

\[ X_t = (\text{Cooperative learning}), \]
\[ X_c = \text{Conventional method (control)}. \]

3.1. Procedure

The study was carried out among junior secondary school students of Gateway Secondary School and Olumo High School both in south-west Nigeria. Using the random sampling technique, a sample of (126) students were selected for the study. The age of the participants ranged between 13 and 18 years with a mean of 14.84

3.2. Instrumentation

The study employed the following standardized instrument:

3.3. Achievement test on Social Studies (ATSS)

The test item consists of thirty items which cut across Social Studies related issues. The test items were drawn from the universal basic education curriculum on Social Studies for junior secondary schools designed by Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The average item difficulty level of the test as well as the reliability was determined using KR = .20 formulas, the reliability coefficient is 0.72

4. FINDINGS

Table 1 above shows that there is a significant main effect of treatment on students’ achievement (F(1,117) = 77.39; P < 0.05). Therefore H01 is not rejected. Table shows the magnitude of preference of achievement above the group.

Table 2 shows that the experimental group have higher mean score (24.96) than the control group which was expose to conventional method (17.85).

NB. Exptal=experimental

Ho 2: There is no significant main effect of gender on students’ achievement.
Based on table 1, there is no significant main effect of gender on achievement (F (1,117) = 0.678; p>0.05). Therefore Ho2 is rejected.

Ho 3: There is no significant main effect of age on students’ achievement.

Table 1 equally shows that there is no main effect of age on achievement. Therefore Ho3 is rejected.

Ho 4: There is no significant interaction effect of treatment, gender and age on achievement.

Table 1 also revealed that there is no interaction effect of treatment, gender and age on achievement (.095; p > 0.05). Therefore Ho 4 is rejected.

5. CONCLUSION

The major goal of this study was to examine jigsaw technique which is an aspect of cooperative learning as an alternative to conventional method of teaching. Once again, the significant main effect of treatment on students’ achievement has been shown to be fundamental. The phenomenon of large classes is fast becoming the vogue of educational institutions in Africa, if not all over the world. The large class syndrome has been attributed to the expansion in annual students’ enrolment. At any rate, education as old as man has been characterized with mass instruction and this is the peculiarity of large classes in various institutions. Hundreds of students often cluster in a small hall tending to pay attention to the teacher talking and chalkling and occasionally scribbles on the chalkboard, while it is mostly assumed that, as the teacher passes the necessary information through verbal means, learning takes place. Whereas Alebiosu (2003) found out that in such a situation, much teaching goes on, but little learning takes place because new perspectives to the teacher talking and chalking and occasionally scribbles on the chalkboard, while it is mostly assumed that, as the teacher passes the necessary information through verbal means, learning takes place. Whereas Alebiosu (2003) found out that in such a situation, much teaching goes on, but little learning takes place because new perspectives through effective communication has therefore been found to be a challenge. In essence, there is the need to be conscious of the fact that the key to effective instruction and students learning is effective appropriate teaching method.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

1. Heusler Ni-Mn-Ga alloy is a good ferromagnetic shape memory material but brittle in nature which limits its potential applications.
2. For the development of miniaturized actuators, Ni-Mn-Ga thin films are good candidates due to their high MFIS and bending nature.
3. In this present work Ni-Mn-Ga films were prepared at different sputtering environments and their physical properties were investigated.
4. Results reveal that the annealed films are soft ferromagnetic showing magnetic transition and no evidence of structural transition.
5. Maximum magnetic transition and maximum negative magneto-resistance of the films were found to be 327 K and -0.61% respectively.

FUTURE ISSUES

The ever-changing political and economic situations in Nigeria have seen people migrating largely from the rural to the urban and mildly from the urban to the rural areas. The effect of these is that there is continued emerging diversity in the society. Hence, a teaching technique which allows for cooperative learning is preferred for harmonious coexistence in the classroom (Aronson, 2008).

Furthermore, valuing diversity in the class means learning about the differences and similarities and finding ways to work which will lead to developing a culturally responsive curriculum and cross cultural understanding to help students build self esteem and successful relationships. It is therefore imperative for teachers to acquire as much knowledge as possible about the world and its culture (Spring, 2009). In order to prepare students to be productive citizens in a global economy, teachers must have the mentality and tools to instill global perspectives in students (Gay, 2004).

Effective teaching and learning could still be achieved through the use of an alternative pedagogy. Consequently, focus should be shifted to Jigsaw technique which is one of the cooperative learning methods. By its very nature students are trained to become active learners who are able to adapt to change and adapt themselves to the learning situation. This learning is participatory and sharply contrasts to the conventional method in which learning is the passive transmission of information from one individual to another, this strategy is commonly used in schools today.

In this era of information technology, students can easily access many kinds of information in which they are interested. Work projects can be initiated at any point and readily extended to include other members of the class. Tarrant, Mackenzie and Hewitt (2006) argued that under such conditions children develop considerable appreciation of an interest in different viewpoints and their sympathies come into action with very little prompting.

Finally, cooperative learning is an instructional strategy that simultaneously addresses academic and social skill learning by students. It is a well-researched instructional strategy and has been reported to be highly successful in the classroom. Considering the fact that there is an ever increasing need for interdependence in all levels of our society, providing students with the tools to effectively work in a collaborative environment should be a priority. Hence cooperative learning technique is one way of providing students with a well defined framework from which to learn from each other.
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