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Impacts of Learners-Friendly Classroom Teachers' Behaviours on Secondary School Social Studies Students' Social Interactions in Mainstream Classes in Nigeria

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Abstract

Despite the potentials of education in fostering development and social connections, teachers in Nigeria are largely deficient of learners-friendly behaviours. Studies have shown that this, amongst others, is responsible for poor social interactions of special students found in mainstream classrooms. Hence, there is need to stem the tide. This study adopted a descriptive survey design. Using stratified random sampling technique, 260 Secondary School students in six secondary schools were selected in Ibadan Metropolis were involved in the study. Data were collected using an adapted questionnaire titled: Learners-friendly Classroom Teachers' Behaviours - Students' Interaction Questionnaire (LFCTB-SIQ, r = 0.78). This study showed that learners-friendly classroom teachers' behaviours had significant impact on students' social interactions in mainstream classes ($F_{(1,258)}$ = 17.269 P<0.05). The analysis further showed a significant difference between male (N=126, X=39.63, SD= 11.58) and female (N=134, X=39.56, SD=5.79) students-teacher interaction in mainstream classes and a significant difference between male (N=139, X= 21.26, SD= 7.34) and female (N = 121, X= 16.22, SD= 5.27) students-students interaction in mainstream classes. While this study has perceived unending impacts on various stakeholders in the education industry, classroom teachers, special educators, care-givers, secondary school principals, ministry of education officials and curriculum developers would find the study helpful. Classroom teachers should realize that, there is a paradigm shift in pedagogy, such that effective teaching is not impacted, but facilitated.

Keywords: Students with disability, mainstream education, students' Social Interactions, learners-friendly classroom teachers' behaviours

Introduction

Due to large classes and other infrastructure failures, most teachers are compelled to employ teacher-centered methods which could not foster effective teaching and learning (Ogunsanya, Ajiboye and Olubela, 2010). Aremu and Salami (2013) assert that in the teacher-centred classroom, knowledge primarily comes from the teacher while in the learners-friendly paradigm, knowledge is the combined efforts of the teacher and students. Parker (2008) observes that in teacher-centered methods, students work primarily alone; and learning is achieved through

repetition. The subject contents are strictly adhered to and guided by old foreign-cultured textbooks. In such methods, Hess (2009) observes that teachers are the all-knowing and all-talkers, while students only sit-down-look, or at best, copy notes which are dictated by the lesson-centred teacher. To Ezeokoli and Adeosun (2008), the rigidity associated with the conventional approach renders it ineffective in the teaching and learning situations.

Adedoja, Abidoye and Afolabi (2013) report that despite the importance of social studies in the school curriculum, the teaching of the subject has been characterized by the use of conventional teaching method where the teacher alone does the talking while the learners remain passive. As a result of the poor teaching strategies, students are less interested in the social and political issues in the country. Bellanca and Brandt (2010) also affirm that unfriendly behaviours also make students to show little or no concern about the welfare of others, and many would not even participate in communal tasks.

Olagunju, Bolaji and Adesina (2012) emphasize that in teaching-learning condition, teachers and learners should interact mutually to exchange ideas, knowledge, attitudes, behaviour, skills, competencies and abilities to the extent that the teacher facilitates and enhances the learning outcomes among the learners. With these traditional methods such as lecture method, talk-chalk method, note-taking method, and the likes, the school system at all levels could not be said to have satisfactorily achieved the national objectives stated in the National Policy on Education of Nigeria (NPE 2004).

Theoretical Background: Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory:

Social learning theorists accept the view of behaviorists that behavior including cognitive and affective is learned and that development is influenced by the environment. According to the social learning theory, one of the fundamental means by which new modes of behaviors are acquired and existing patterns are modified, entails modeling and vicarious processes. Bandura (1976) who developed this theory opines that children learn by observing the behavior of others (parents, teachers, friends, and famous people) and imitating and modeling their behavior. Acquisitions of new skills by observing the behaviors of others are a common part of everyday life. The opinion imitators, they imitate what they have seen others do. They acquire large units of behavior through watching, imitating, modeling and interaction with others.

This theory is relevant to this study in the sense that reflective discouser strategy provides opportunities for students to interact with one another and learn from other members of the group. People can learn by observing the behaviors of others and the outcomes of those behaviors. Learning can occur without a change in behavior. Behaviorists say that learning has to be represented by a permanent change in behaviour, in contrast social learning theorists say that

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because people can learn through observation alone, their learning may not necessarily be shown in their performance. Learning may or may not result in a behavior change. Cognition plays a role in learning. Over the last 30 years social learning theory has become increasingly cognitive in its interpretation of human learning. Awareness and expectations of future reinforcements or punishments can have a major effect on the behaviors that people exhibit. Social learning theory can be considered a bridge or a transition between behaviorist learning theories and cognitive learning theories.

Social learning theory has numerous implications for classroom use:

1. Students often learn a great deal simply by observing other people.
2. Describing the consequences of behavior is can effectively increase the appropriate behaviors and decrease inappropriate ones. This can involve discussing with learners about the rewards and consequences of various behaviors.
3. Modeling provides an alternative to shaping for teaching new behaviors. Instead of using shaping, which is operant conditioning; modeling can provide a faster, more efficient means for teaching new behavior. To promote effective modeling a teacher must make sure that the four essential conditions exist; attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation.
4. Teachers and parents must model appropriate behaviors and take care that they do not model inappropriate behaviors.
5. Teachers should expose students to a variety of other models. This technique is especially important to break down traditional stereotypes.
6. Students must believe that they are capable of accomplishing school tasks. Thus it is very important to develop a sense of self-efficacy for students. Teachers can promote such self-efficacy by having students receive confidence-building messages watch others be successful and experiences success on their own. .
7. Teachers should help students set realistic expectations for their academic accomplishments. In general in my class that means making sure that expectations are not set too low. However, sometimes the task is beyond a student's ability, example would be the cancer group.
8. Self-regulation techniques provide an effective method for improving student behavior.

Issues facing students with disabilities

As for all children, education is vital in itself but also instrumental for participating in employment and other areas of social activity (Garuba, 2003). In some cultures, attending school is part of becoming a complete person. Social relations can change the status of people with

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disabilities in society and affirm their rights. For children who are not disabled, contact with children with a disability in an inclusive setting can, over the longer term, increase familiarity and reduce prejudice. Inclusive education is thus central in promoting inclusive and equitable societies (Kauffman & Landrum, 2009).

In general, Ajuwon (2008) assert that children with disabilities are less likely to start school and have lower rates of staying and being promoted in school. The correlations for both children and adults between low educational outcomes and having a disability is often stronger than the correlations between low educational outcome and other characteristics such as gender, rural residence, and low economic status. Turning to country-specific examples, evidence shows young people with disabilities are less likely to be in school than their peers without disabilities. This pattern is more pronounced in poorer countries.

Many barriers may hinder children with disabilities; these include but not limited to the followings:-

1. **Weak legislation, policy, targets and plans in Nigeria:** While there are many examples of initiatives to include children with disabilities in education, a lack of legislation, policy, targets and plans tends to be a major obstacle in efforts to provide Education for All. The gaps in policy that are commonly encountered include a lack of financial and other targeted incentives for children with disabilities to attend school and a lack of social protection and support services for children with disabilities and their families (Hammond & Ingalls, 2003).
2. **Inadequate resources:** Limited or inappropriate resources are regarded as a significant barrier to ensuring inclusive education for children with disabilities. A study in the United States found that the average cost for educating a child with a disability was 1.9 times the cost for a child without a disability, with the multiplier ranging from 1.6 to 3.1 depending on the type and extent of the disability. In most developing countries it is difficult to reach all those in need even when educational systems are well planned and support inclusion. National budgets for education are often limited and families are frequently unable to afford the costs of education. There are shortages of resources such as few schools, inadequate facilities, insufficient qualified teachers and a lack of learning materials (UNESCO, 2009).
3. **Curriculum and teaching problems:** Flexible approaches in education are needed to respond to the diverse abilities and needs of all learners. Where curricula and teaching methods are rigid and there is a lack of appropriate teaching materials. Assessment and evaluation systems are often focused on academic performance rather than individual

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progress and therefore can also be restrictive for children with special education needs. Where parents have anxieties about the quality of mainstream schools, they are more likely to push for segregated solutions for their children with disabilities (UNESCO, 2010).

4. **Inadequate training and support for teachers:** Teachers may not have the time or resources to support disabled learners. In resource-poor settings classrooms are frequently overcrowded and there is a severe shortage of well trained teachers capable of routinely handling the individual needs of children with disabilities. The majority of teachers lack sign-language skills creating barriers for Deaf pupils. Other supports such as classroom assistants are also lacking. Advances in teacher education have not necessarily kept pace with the policy changes (Agbenyega, Deppeler & Harvey, 2005).

5. **Physical barriers:** Physical access to school buildings is an essential prerequisite for educating children with disabilities. Those with physical disabilities are likely to face difficulties in travelling to school if, for example, the roads and bridges are unsuitable for wheelchair use and the distances are too great. Even if it is possible to reach the school, there may be problems of stairs, narrow doorways, inappropriate seating, or inaccessible toilet facilities (Ainscow & Miles, 2009).

6. **Labelling, castigation and stigmatization:** Children with disabilities are often categorized according to their health condition to determine their eligibility for special education and other types of support services. For example, a diagnosis of dyslexia, blindness, or deafness can facilitate access to technological and communication support and specialized teaching. But assigning labels to children in education systems can have negative effects including stigmatization, peer rejection, lower self-esteem, lower expectations, and limited opportunities. Students may be reluctant about revealing their disability due to negative attitudes, thus missing out on needed support services. This suggested that a label can lead to more negative attitudes and that adults attitudes were critical in developing policies on the education of children with disabilities (Ainscow & Miles, 2009).

7. **Attitudinal barriers:** Negative attitudes are a major obstacle to the education of disabled children. In some cultures people with disabilities are seen as a form of divine punishment or as carriers of bad fortune. As a result, children with disabilities who could be in school are sometimes not permitted to attend. Negative community attitudes were also reflected in the language used to refer to people with disabilities. The attitudes of teachers, school administrators, other children, and even family members affect the inclusion of children

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with disabilities in mainstream schools. Ajuwon (2008) reiterated that some school teachers, including head teachers, believe they are not obliged to teach children with disabilities. Even where people are supportive of students with disabilities, expectations might be low, with the result that little attention is paid to academic achievement. Teachers, parents, and other students may well be caring but at the same time not believe in the capacity of the children to learn. Some families with disabled students may believe that special schools are the best places for their children's education (Mercer & Pullen, 2009).

8. **Violence, bullying, and abuse:** Violence against students with disabilities by teachers, other staff, and fellow students - is common in educational settings. Students with disabilities often become the targets of violent acts including physical threats and abuse, verbal abuse, and social isolation. The fear of bullying can be as great an issue for children with disabilities as actual bullying. Children with disabilities may prefer to attend special schools, because of the fear of stigma or bullying in mainstream schools. Deaf children are particularly vulnerable to abuse because of their difficulties with spoken communication (Hammond & Ingalls, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

Active participation by a student in the learning process is better and preferable to inert and passive reception of knowledge when learning in the classroom. Despite the potentials of education in fostering development and social connections, teachers in Nigeria are largely deficient of learners-friendly behaviours. Studies have shown that this, amongst others, is responsible for poor social interactions of special students found in mainstream classrooms. Hence, there is need to stem the tide. This study seeks to establish the impacts of learners-friendly classroom teachers' behaviours on secondary school social studies students' social interactions in mainstream classes in Nigeria. While this study has perceived unending impacts on various stakeholders in the education industry, classroom teachers, special educators, care-givers, secondary school principals, ministry of education officials and curriculum developers would find the study helpful. Classroom teachers should realize that, there is a paradigm shift in pedagogy, such that effective teaching is not impacted, but facilitated. This research investigated the impacts of learners-friendly classroom teachers' behaviours on secondary school social studies students' social interactions in mainstream classes in Nigeria

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

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Ho1: Learners-friendly classroom teachers' behaviours will not significantly impact on secondary school social studies students' social interactions in mainstream classes in Nigeria

Ho2: There is no significant difference between male and female students-teacher interaction in mainstream classes

Ho3: There is no significant difference between male and female students-students interaction in mainstream classes

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Using stratified random sampling technique, six secondary schools were selected in Ibadan Metropolis. 260 Secondary School students were involved in the study. Data were collected using an adapted questionnaire titled: Learners-friendly Classroom Teachers' Behaviours – Students' Interaction Questionnaire (LFCTB-SIQ, r = 0.78). Data were analyzed using Analysis of Covariance (ANOVA) to test Ho1, and t-test was used to test Ho2 and Ho3. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Ho1: Learners-friendly classroom teachers' behaviours will not significantly impact on secondary school social studies students' social interactions in mainstream classes

Table 1: Summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on students' social interactions in mainstream classes

Dependent Variable: Students' social interactions

Source of variation	Sum of Square	Mean Square	F	Sig of F
Covariates Inst-res	170.900 170.900	170.900 170.900	2.525 2.525	.133 .133
Main effects	2447.850	1489.570	7.234	.000*
2-way interaction Learners-friendly X students social interactions	375.287 223.930 115.177	46.911 55.983 57.588	.693 .827 3 .851	.698 .509 .428
Explained	3295.808	183.100	2.705	.000
Residual	18341.447	67.681		
Total	21637.255	74.869		

From the summary of the ANCOVA of the post students' social interactions presented in Table 1, learners-friendly classroom teachers' behaviours had significant impact on students' social interactions in mainstream classes ($F_{(1,258)}$ = 17.269 P<0.05). This means that there is a significant difference in the achievement of students exposed to learners-friendly classroom teachers' behaviours than those exposed to conventional classroom. On the basis of these finding, the null hypothesis that learners-friendly classroom teachers' behaviours will not significantly impact on

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secondary school social studies students' social interactions in mainstream classes is hereby rejected.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between male and female students-teacher interaction in mainstream classes

Table 2: ***Summary of t-test analysis of male and female students-teacher interaction***

Respondent Type	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	t-cab	t-tab	P	Decision
Male students	126	39.63	11.58	259	12.37	1.96	0.05	**Ho: Rejected**
Female Students	134	32.56	5.79					

Table 2 showed a significant difference between male (N=126, X=39.63, SD= 11.58) and female (N=134, X=39.56, SD=5.79) students-teacher interaction in mainstream classes. The t-test analysis also revealed that the t-cal value 12.37 was greater than the t-tab value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value (12.37) was greater than the table value (1.96), the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between male and female students-teacher interaction in mainstream classes, is hereby rejected. Consequently therefore, an alternate hypothesis that says there is a significant difference between male and female students-teacher interaction in mainstream classes is hereby adopted instead.

Ho3: There is no significant difference between male and female students-students interaction in mainstream classes

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of students-students interaction in mainstream classes

Respondent Type	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	t-cal	t-tab	P	Decision
Male students	139	21.26	7.34	259	11.15	1.96	0.05	**Ho: Rejected**
Female Students	121	16.22	5.27					

In table 3, analysis showed a significant difference between male (N=139, X= 21.26, SD= 7.34) and female (N = 121, X= 16.22, SD= 5.27) students-students interaction in mainstream classes. The t-test analysis also revealed that the t-cal value 11.15 is greater than the t-tab value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value (11.15) is greater than the table value (1.96), the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between male and female students-students interaction in mainstream classes, is hereby rejected. Consequently therefore, an

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alternate hypothesis that says there is no significant difference between male and female students-students interaction in mainstream classes is hereby adopted instead.

Discussion of Findings

Learners-friendly behaviour is the driving force of teachers' productivity and development. Rubenstein (2010) categorized learners-friendly teaching into four Ps, namely: product, person (personality of creator), press (environment where learners-friendly teaching takes place) and process. Hence, Soh (2008) explained learners-friendly teaching fostering behaviour as a deliberate attempt by the teacher to impart or inculcate learners-friendly thinking and process in the learner. Stenberg and Lubart (2006) enumerated the importance of learners-friendly teaching both at individual and societal levels. At the individual level, it is relevant when solving problems on the job and in daily life. At societal level, it leads to new scientific findings, new invention and new social programmes. The economic relevance of learners-friendly teaching is obvious because new services or products create jobs. At recreational level, learners-friendly teaching enhances ease, comfort and convenience. Above all, individuals, organizations and societies must adapt existing resources to changing task demands to remain competitive and relevant in modern world.

Anyanwu (2008) posited that human beings become productive resources or human capital only when they are able and in a position to contribute meaningfully to productive economic activities. This implies that humans have to be resourceful or learners-friendly to become agents of production or economic activities. Without this, they would remain passive, potentially vibrant and inactive as other factors of production. Thus, when people are trained in learners-friendly behaviour, they are fashioned to lead useful lives, enhance their capacity building and contribute to societal development. Blaug (2010) maintained that this kind of training would result to economic expansion while the beneficiary would be able to secure qualitative life by being able to make the right choices and command higher earning profile.

Adesua (2003) stated that teachers are catalysts in promoting social change in the society. Soh (2007) explained that teachers can do this through his interaction with students by rewarding their learners-friendly efforts (process) and outcomes (products) as well as recognizing their learners-friendly traits (personality). Awoyele (2008) submitted that teacher quality is the universal answer to socio-economic problems of the world. These behaviour leads to divergent thinking and openness and a tolerance for ambiguity in the classroom. Learners-friendly teaching needs both a specific and a general knowledge base. This is stimulated by teachers who

i. encourage the development of special interests
ii. have a cooperative, socially integrative style of teaching
iii. do not neglect mastery of factual knowledge

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iv. offer opportunities to work with a variety of materials
v. ask 'why' questions to stimulate the study of cause-effect relations
vi. instruct students in the processing skills used to analyze and synthesize problems
vii. allow for sustained occupation with a special activity.

Students need to be provided with relevant learning experiences and opportunities in order to learn to observe the world from a variety of angles and to analyze, categorize, and really delve into the problems they encounter in learning as well as in lives. In addition to using a microscopic view to analyze the characteristics of students' memory representations, educators should also adopt the macroscopic perspective to help build a learners-friendly learning environment and to advocate the importance of the development of higher-order cognition in students (Smith, 2000). Not only do students need to participate in activities in order to understand the diverse nature of knowledge, but they need a diverse range of activities to help stimulate their general and critical thinking abilities. Teachers' professional growth is already a slow process that takes a long time (Chin, Leu, & Lin, 2009), and the obstacles preventing them from implementing learners-friendly teaching are even greater.

Majority of teachers still rely heavily on classroom lectures and blackboard demonstrations; most of them lack either the ability or the will to develop and utilize diversified, innovative ways of teaching (Chen, Ting, & Hong, 2006). This gives the indication of how much learners-friendly teaching is neglected in the school system. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to investigate and understand how learners-friendly teaching can be more widely adopted and effectively used by ordinary teachers in order to help promote the development of higher-order thinking skills in students, thereby giving them an edge for tomorrow's global competition. Soh (2007) argued that for a long time now experimental research on learners-friendly thinking has been largely using students as subjects while teachers' learners-friendly teaching behaviours are rarely studied, and attributed this to the lack of a comprehensive construct or knowledge on teachers' learners-friendly teaching behaviours.

Conclusion

The voices of children with disabilities themselves must be heard, though they frequently are not. In recent years children have been more involved in studies of their experiences of education. The results of such child-informed research are of great benefit for educational planners and policy-makers and can be a source of evidence as educational systems become more inclusive. Child-to-child cooperation should be better used to promote inclusion. Audiovisual methods have been particularly effective in bringing out the views of children in a range of socioeconomic settings.

Recommendations

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1. Focus on educating children as close to the mainstream as possible. This includes, if necessary, establishing links between special education facilities and mainstream schools.
2. Do not build new special school if no special schools exist. Instead, use the resources to provide additional support for children with disabilities in mainstream schools.
3. Ensure an inclusive educational infrastructure – for example, by mandating minimum standards of environmental accessibility to enable access to school for children with disabilities.
4. Accessible and convenient transport system for the children with disability is also vital, and must be ensured, both by the parents and the school.
5. Make teachers aware of their responsibilities towards all children, build and improve their skills for teaching children with disabilities. Educating teachers about including children with disabilities should ideally take place in both pre-service and in-service teacher education. It should have a special emphasis on teachers in rural areas, where there are fewer services for children with disabilities.
6. Support teachers and schools to move away from a one-size-fits-all model towards flexible approaches that can cope with students' disabilities.
7. Increased awareness about the need for effective teaching of children with disabilities should be made to the parents and community members, so that they would be well-informed, and give the required supports to the school system.

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