

**THE EFFECT OF GROUP ASSIGNMENT TEACHING METHOD ON
BASIC SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENTS' ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE IN CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN ILE-IFE NIGERIA**

A. J. Obadiora

Department of Special Education and Curriculum Studies

Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Nigeria

Abstract

This study looks at the use of small group assignment instructional strategy in teaching Nigerian cultural diversity and culture tolerance in the Nigerian secondary school Social Studies class. The study aimed at promoting better understanding of the Nigerian cultural diversity and tolerance among Nigerian children and youth. Quasi-experimental research design was used to carry out the study. A sample of 111 JSS3 students was drawn from two purposively selected public secondary schools in Ife Central Local Government Area of Osun State. An academic performance test which has two parts was used to collect data for the study. The data collected were analyzed using t-test statistical analysis. The research findings showed a significant difference in the academic performance of students taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance with Small group assignment instructional strategy (EV = 63.89) and those taught with teacher expository instructional strategy (EV = 54.18). The result also revealed that there is a significant difference in the academic performance of male students taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance (EV =55.35) and female students taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance (EV = 63.17). The study concluded that the use of small group assignment instructional strategy is effective

in teaching Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance in Social Studies class.

Introduction

Nigeria has been identified as a multicultural society. The Country has over two hundred cultural groups (Obaro, 1999). These groups were brought together as a single political entity in 1914 under the British colonial administration for the ease of management without putting the people's cultural differences into consideration. The seriousness of the people toward their ethnic identity, various traditions and cultural differences became obvious after their independence when the center could no longer hold. This marked the beginning of the 1967 Nigeria civil war. After the war, it became very important to find way of uniting the people as a nation. In pursuance of this, Nigerian government considered education as a very good day effective means of getting Nigerians united. In line with this, a conference was held at Lagos; that is the Nigerian National Curriculum Conference. The report of the conference led to the adoption of the first Nigerian National Policy on Education which was first published in 1977. One of the values of the policy is that of its five national goals (FRN 2004) which the national educational programme is meant to achieve:

- a. **A free and democratic society:** Nigeria is to be created a society where members will be free to participate in decision making.
- b. **A just and egalitarian society:** Nigeria is to be made a society where equal right will be given to members without favouritism. A society where members will be treated equally

- c. **A united, strong and self reliant nation:** Nigeria is to be created a society where people speak with one voice with indivisible mind to use their abundant natural resources to produce goods and services of international standard toward building a sovereign nation.
- d. **A great and dynamic economy:** To make Nigeria a nation with diverse economic sectors.
- e. **A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens:** Nigeria is to be created a lively nation that provides members with opportunities for self-actualization.

Also, the policy had to consider a number of subjects to implement the design. Fortunately, the development and introduction of Social Studies as a teaching subject coincided with this. Consequently Social Studies was considered as appropriate subject to give Nigerian children and youth understanding of their physical, economical, social and cultural environment and to understand the same of other human being. In spite of teaching this useful subject (Social Studies) in the Nigerian schools, it could not be ascertained that Nigeria has achieved her goal of national integration. The flaws could be among other variables of inability to keep children and youth well informed about the pluralistic nature of the Nigerian society via effective teaching of Social Studies. It must be noted that the conventional teacher expository teaching method has been over used at the expense of other instructional strategies that could be used for effective teaching of the subject. Therefore, this study is investigating the effectiveness of small group assignment teaching strategy on the teaching of Nigerian cultural diversity and tolerance for national integration.

Statement of the Problems

Conflicts have become part of every Nigerian's life. It is obvious that Nigeria has been facing series of crises ranges from socio-political to religious crises. The root of all these crises has been traced down to the cultural differences and ethnic allegiance of the people. Hardly has the nation experience an era without one crisis or the other. Ethnic loyalty did not allow Nigerians to establish cordial relationship; the people have never recognize themselves as one. People live and interact along the line of bitterness from generation to generation. It is the belief of the minorities that they have been marginalized. They argue that there is sentiment in almost everything government does, there is imbalance in government representation, in creation of state, in allocation of resources and that every system has been politicized in favour of the region were the leaders come from. All these and many more informed the destructive activities of different militant ethnic youth movements and religious fanatics such as Boko Haram, Bakassi Boys, Egbesu Boys, Odua People's Congress, the Arewa People's Congress, the Ijaw Youth Council And The Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force to mention a few. It appears that every effort of the government to bring Nigerian People together, to resist the activities of the aforementioned Nigerian militant youths and religious fanatics have proved abortive. However if these situations persist it can lead to total disintegration of the country. It is expedient to look for ways of addressing these problems things should not continue in the way it is, all hands must be on deck for the survival of the nation Nigeria. Hence, it is important to start experimenting effective teaching of the Nigerian cultural diversity and tolerance through Social Studies education on the Nigerian children and youth at the early stage of their lives.

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to promote better understanding of the Nigerian cultural diversity and tolerance among Nigerian children and youth using small group assignment instructional strategy as a means of achieving national integration through Social Studies education in junior secondary school. Thus the specific objectives of this study are to:

- a. examine the effectiveness of small group assignment instructional strategy on students academic performance in Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance in secondary schools Social Studies classes.
- b. investigate the difference in the academic performance of male and female secondary school students in Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance in Social Studies classes.

Research Hypotheses

This study specifically tested the following hypotheses:

- H₀₁ There is no significant difference in the academic performance of secondary school students taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance with small group assignment instructional strategy and those taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance with teacher expository instructional strategy in Social Studies classes.
- H₀₂ There is no significant difference in the academic performance of male and female secondary school students taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance in Social Studies classes.

Theoretical Framework

This study is supported by social constructivism learning theory. The proponents of this theory such as Albert Bandura and Lev Vygotsky believe that learning should be by doing or by experience. Bandura (1997) posits that people learn from one another through

observation, imitation and modeling and that People form an idea of how new behaviours are performed from observing others. Bandura's theory falls in line with the way people learn culture.

Children learn culture of the society from their members of immediate family through observation and imitation. Bandura therefore suggested four conditions that can bring about effective learning these are (a) attention (b) retention (c) reproduction (d) motivation. All these conditions are features of the small group assignment instructional strategy. While using the strategy the students are divided into a smaller unit/group this necessitates individual's participation which requires their attention and commitment to the group task. Students are encouraged to pay attention to the group discussion and interaction when they realized that they have one role or the other to play or that their contributions will reflect in their group performance. In the same vain, when learners participate in teaching learning activities they retain knowledge gained than when they are just a passive listeners. When things are clearly learnt and well understood, learners tend to be motivated to learn more and construct behavioural objectives Learners always produce and reproduce what has been learnt especially in a situation when they are praised / rewarded for doing it well in the first instance.

Vgotsky (1978), as reported by Learning Theory Knowledge Base (2011) is of the opinion that social interaction precedes cognitive development and plays a significant role in the process of cognitive development. His argument was that children cognitive development takes place while the child interacts with other

people especially those who have better understanding than he/she does (More Knowledgeable Other MKO). The more knowledgeable others could be his/her peer, adult or machine that has higher ability than the child with respect to a particular task. Vygotsky guesses that interaction increases awareness of things unknown before, thereby expanding cognitive structure. Therefore learning should involve effective participation of the students. Also, students' interaction causes exposure to ideas that contradicts individuals own beliefs and may cause them to examine those beliefs and perhaps structure them.

In view of this, Nigerian children and youth must be allowed to interact, observe and imitate one another's culture in order to achieve the nation goal of national integration. The use of small group assignment instructional strategy will enable the learners to gain useful experiences and skills for effective observation, imitation and interaction with each other and more knowledgeable adults.

Literature Review

Culture has been defined in many ways; many people look at it as ways of living of a particular people. Webster Encyclopedia (1992) defines culture as the way of life of a particular society or group of people including their patterns of thought, beliefs, behaviour, customs, traditions, rituals, dress and language, as well as art, music and literature. According to Lederach (1995), culture is the shared knowledge and scheme created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting expressing and responding to the social realities around them. In the same vein, Filo (2008) defines culture as shared values and beliefs in a given group. Carla (2009) have the same view with Lederach and Filo about culture by defining culture as the shared patterns of behaviours and interations, cognitive constructs and effective understanding that are learned through a process of socialization. Deepa (2011) opinion is not all that far from others he describes culture as a

learned pattern of behavior and ways in which a person lives his or her life. It is something that a person learns from his family and surroundings and everybody must learn it to survive in a society. However, culture can be summarily defined as the total ways of life identifiable with a particular group of people.

Culture has two main components material and non-material components. The material component of culture include food, dresses, shelter, equipments and tools, while non-material component are language, attitude, beliefs and religion, music and dance as well as norms and values of a society (New World Encyclopedia 2007).

Nigeria is a nation of numerous ethnic groups that are vary and very rich in customs and traditions. This could be the reason for the complexity of the existing cultural diversity of the nation.

Cultural diversity is used to describe a society with people of different ethnic groups and traditions (Filo, 2008). According to Obaro (1999) there are more than 200 ethnic groups in Nigeria with their distinctive customs, traditions and languages these groups include the Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Jukun, Edo, Itshekiri, Ibibio, Efik, Urhobo, Isoko, Idoma, Tiv, Birom, Angas, Kanem, Fulani, Nupe, Igala, Ijaw, Aguleri, Kagoro Moro'a, Jaba, Fantsuan, Bajju, Gbagi, Kagoma, Mada, Ninzam, Attaka Attukar Koro, Eko, Kutebq, Kataf, Egbira, Ikwerre, and Kanuri among others. In addition, there are more than four hundred language groups in Nigeria (Omolewa 1986). Osaghae and Suberu (2005) affirm that the exact number of ethnic groups in Nigerian is not known they said further that different estimations have been given by several authors Hoffman (1974) give the estimation of 394, Mardrock (1975) 62, Gandonu (1978) 161 and Odetola (1978) 143 to mention a few.

Nigerian cultural heritage and elements are too numerous, the people can be easily identified with their diverse languages, their mode of dressings, religions, music, dance among others. The differences in these people's ways of lives are caused by their origin, geographical location and external influences. Omolewa (1986) explains that geography has affected the culture of Nigerians in many ways. He admits that it is the climate, the amount of rain, the nature of the soil, the amount of heat, nature of the terrain and access to water that determine so many aspects of human's culture. Omolewa gave examples of the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri who inhabit the savanna grassland of the north as herdsmen, very Knowledgeable in cattle-rearing and very versed in cavalry. The Ijo and Efik of Niger Delta who cannot practice agriculture because of saltwater swamps but have access to fishing and the use of saltwater for making salt. The Yoruba, Edo and Igbo people of the rain forest in the southern part of the nation cultivate food crops and cash crops due to the nature of their land and the climatic condition.

Nigerian people are traditional worshippers before the advent of the Fulani Jihadists and the Christian Missionaries. In contrast today Nigerians are predominantly Muslims in the north and predominantly Christians in the south. Nigerian people have several delicacies the local Hausa food include Kosai, Funkaso, Tuwo, Miya, Kilichi, Yoruba's food comprise Iyan, Eba, Amala, Eko, Ewedu, Egusi and Gbegiri while Igbo people eat Akpu, Afan, Edikaikon, Epankukwo, Oha with Gari. Talking about the Nigerian people mode of dressing, they all have beautiful and attractive attires, the Igbo, Ijaw and Urhobo people dress in the same way with their gorgeous Wrapper, George and feather cap, likewise the Fulani, Hausa and the Kanuri people have similar beautiful adornment such as Gare, Babban Gida and Huluna Cap. The Yorubas have their elegant wears of Buba, Sokoto, Agbada, Dansiki, Kembe, Iro, Fila and Gele. Nigerian traditional

music is functional it is performed to mark a ceremony such as a wedding, funeral, religious festival, entertainment, amusement or to encourage people at work for example while pounding yam, farming, blacksmithing etc. some of these music are the Yoruba music of Apala, Juju, Fuji, Awurebe, the Igbo music of Ikorodo and Highlife and the Hausa music of Dan Maraya, Tambura, Kakaki and Maliki (New World Encyclopedia 2007).

According to Omolewa (1986) Nigerians have not recognized themselves as belonging to one family. He stated further that even after the independence there has not been a Nigerian nation. Each region mistrusted its neighbour. The attitude of the leaders did not help to establish cordial relationships among the various ethnic groups. Nigerians are more likely to define themselves in terms of their ethnic groups than considering any other variables (Oshagea and Suberu, 2005). People are interested in serving their ethnic group than serving the nation. In view of this, it became difficult to realize her dream of unity and integration even after the civil war. National integration is a process of overcoming ethnic rivalry with the aim of creating a homogeneous society within a multicultural society. Ifeanchio and Nwagwu (2009) identified issues of minority groups, religious conflicts, ethnic politics, resource control, youth restiveness and the call for a sovereign national conference as the major problems standing against the unity of the land. In the same vein, Salawu (2010) argues that the causes of Nigerian conflicts are accusations and allegations of neglect, oppression, domination, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry. Ifeanchio and Nwagwu elucidate that what is required in Nigeria is true democratization of culture. Nigerian ethnic groups need friendliness to move the nation forward. Salawu suggested that government should move from conflict resolution to the stage of conflict prevention if the nation's vision of national unity and integration

will not be a mirage. In other words government should do everything in her capacity to disallow conflict in Nigeria rather than looking for way of settling it.

Methodology

This study was carried out with quasi experimental design. Pretest posttest control group was adopted to test the hypotheses. The experimental and control groups were taught same subject matter that is Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance using different teaching methods. Small Group Assignment (SGA) instructional strategy was used to teach group A-the experimental group while Teacher Expository (TE) method was used to teach group B-the control group. Two public secondary schools were purposively selected from where 111 JSS 3 students were randomly selected for this study. The purpose of selecting these schools was the level of the existing students' cultural heterogeneous in the schools that is in these schools there are many students that came from different cultural background. The study was carried out in four weeks. In the course of the study, students learn about the Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance. With the assistance of the class teacher, the students in the small group assignment instructional strategy were divided into small group of six students from different ethnic groups and different learning ability. Each small group was given assignment on different aspects of the topic such as religious, language, mode of dressing, dance, music, marriage and traditional equipment of the Nigerian people. The students in the control group were taught in the class with the conventional teaching method.

The Academic Performance Test in Social Studies (APTSS) developed by the researcher was used to test students understanding of the nation cultural diversity and tolerance. The fifty test items was divided into two equal parts, the first 25 items tested students knowledge on Nigerian cultural diversity while the second 25

							Lower	Upper	
Scores	1.67	.683	.428	109	.670	.840	1.963	-3.051	4.7332
Equal variance assumed									
Equal variances not assumed			.428	108.328	.670	.840	1.965	-3.054	4.734

P=0.05

The result from table 1 implies that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of the pre test of the two groups, Small group assignment instructional strategy group (=30.63) and teacher expository instructional strategy group (=29.79), The $t_c = 0.43$ while $t_t = 2.00$, ($t_c = 0.43 < t_t = 2.00$, $df = 109$, $p = 0$)

The testing of the two hypotheses for this study was undertaken to decide whether they should be rejected or not to be rejected.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the academic performance of Secondary school students taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance with small group assignment instructional strategy and those taught with teacher expository instructional strategy in Social Studies classes.

Table 2

At-test Analysis of the Academic Performance of the Two Groups Taught Nigerian Cultural Diversity and Cultural Tolerance

Group Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Scores	Experimental	54	63.89	11.515	1.567
	conventional	57	54.18	8.890	1.178

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance s	t-test for Equality of Means								
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Scores Equal variance assumed	3.864	.052	.4990	109	.000	9.713	1.947	5.855	13.572	
Equal variances not assumed			4.956	99.679	.000	9.713	1.960	5.824	13.602	

P=0.05

From table 2 the result shows a significant difference in the academic performance of students taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance with small group assignment instructional strategy (=63.89) and those taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance with teacher expository instructional strategy (=54.18). The difference observed was in favour of the small group assignment instructional strategy (the experimental group). The $t_c = 4.99$ was greater than the critical t_t value = 2.00 at 0.05 level of probability ($t_c 4.99 > t_t = 2.00$, $df = 109$, $p = 0.05$). Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the academic performance of male and female secondary school students taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance in Social Studies classes.

Table 3

A t-test Analysis of the Academic Performance of Male and Female Secondary School Students Taught Nigerian Cultural Diversity and Cultural Tolerance

Group Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Scores	Male students	62	55.35	9.217	1.171
	Female students	48	63.17	12.210	1.762

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means								
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Scores Equal variance assumed	4.109	.045	-3.825	108	.000	-7.812	2.042	-11.860	-3.763	
Equal variances not assumed			-3.692	84.889	.000	-7.812	2.116	-12.018	-3.605	

P=0.05

The result as presented in table 3 shows a significant difference in the academic performance of the male students taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance (=55.35) and female students taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance (= 63.17). The difference observed was in favour of the female students. The $t_c = 3.83$ is greater than the critical t_t value =2.00 at 0.05 level of probability ($t_c = 3.83 > t_t = 2.00$, $df = 108$, $p = 0.05$)

Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

The results presented indicate that academic performance of students taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance improved when taught with small group assignment instructional strategy in Social Studies classes compared with the academic performance of students taught with teacher expository instructional strategy in Social Studies classes. The difference could be attributed to the fact that students have opportunity to interact well with their peers, parents and adults of different ethnic and cultural groups. Small group work promotes learning in providing opportunity to share and test ideas with others and to examine different perspectives on issues. During the interaction students have opportunity to find out details about different cultural groups in Nigeria. A well-presented explanation and description enable students to construct knowledge. The findings of this study is in line with Beatrice (2001), Richard and Rebecca (2003) all concurred that working in small participatory group promotes learning and leads to improving human relations and social interaction.

The result of this study also shows that female students taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance have better academic performance than the male students taught Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance. This may be influenced by their natural endowment and special ability in human relation as well as good social interaction. The result corroborate the opinion of Young and Ailee (1998) that women develop their self-concept through relationship with others and have special ability to be sensitive to other's needs as well as to respond to them. The result also confirms the view of the United Nation (2002) that Women are very active in peace and disarmament issues. Women from the period of the First World War have been lobbied for controls over the production and sale of

conventional arms, the control of missiles, the need to reduce military expenditures and arms business.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The overall goal of education is to generate development; this can be possible by means of effective interaction with people in the society through internalization of culture. Nigerian is yet to be recognized as a nation due to their cultural enmity, many people considered it to be a geopolitical entity. It must be however noted that the contemporary need of the nation is peace and unity in that no development is possible, no good is achievable at the absence of peace. Nigerians must promote cultural tolerance that is they must be willing to accept their cultural differences and give room for peaceful co-existence and development. Having considered education as a tool for national development, the nation attention should be focused more on the implementation of the appropriate curriculum that can integrate and foster the unity of the nation. It is important to expose Nigerian children and youth to the knowledge of the nation cultural diversity and cultural tolerance early enough at the primary and secondary school levels to eradicate the existing Nigeria ethnic hostility

Cultural education is one of the fundamental issues in the Nigerian Social Studies curriculum. The curriculum is capable of giving Nigerian children and youth better understanding of the pluralistic nature of the society and be able to interact and relate well with themselves as one family Social Studies education should be effectively and functionally implemented in Nigerian because it will go a long way with achieving the objective of building a Nigerian nation. Social Studies teachers should train and guide the students to be familiar with each other, communicate with each other and accommodate each other as part of their input to unite the nation. Based on the findings of this study, it has been understood that the use of

small group assignment instructional strategy is effective in teaching Nigerian cultural diversity and cultural tolerance in Social Studies class. It is therefore recommended that Social Studies teacher should adopt small group assignment as instructional strategy for the effective teaching of the subject for national integration. Further more women efforts should be employed to foster national unity and integration for it is believed that they are very good at it.

References

- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York W.H. Freeman.
- Banks, J.A., & McGee, C.A. (1989). *Multicultural education*. Needham, Allyn & Bacon.
- Beatrice, A. W (2005). *Instructional grouping in the classroom*. USA, Northwest Regional Education Laboratory.
- Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) (2009). *What is culture?* Minneapolis, CARLA.
- Damen, L. (1987). *Culture learning: The fifth dimension on the language classroom*. MA, Addison - Wesley.
- Deepa, K. (2011). *What is culture?* Retrieved from deepagoogle.com
- Encyclopedia Britannica. (2006). *Biafra*. Retrieved from Encyclopedia Britannica Online.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education*. (4th ed.). Nigeria, NERDC Press

Filo, I. (2008). Cross culture. Retrieved from Filolog.com <http://Filolog.com>

Hofstede, G. (1984). National cultures and corporate cultures. In L.A. Samovar & R.E. Porter (Eds), *Communication between cultures*. Belmont, CA:Wadsworth.

Ifeanacho, M.I., & Nwagu, J. (2009). Democratization and national integration in Nigeria. *Research Journal of International Studies*, 9. 12-20.

Learning Theories Knowledge Base (2011). Social learning theory. Retrieved from <http://www.learningtheories.com/social-learning-theory-bandura.Htm/>

Lederach, J.P (1995). *Preparing for peace: Conflict transformation across cultures*. New York: Syracuse University Press

New World Encyclopedia (2007). Igbo people. Retrieved from New World Encyclopedia Online.

Obaro, I. (1999). *Historical society of Nigeria: Groundwork of Nigerian history*. Ibadan: Oluseyi Press.

Osaghae. E. E., & Suberu, R.T (2005). A history of identities violence, and stability in Nigeria. *Center for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity*, 6, 5-10.

Omolewa, M. (1986) *Certificate history of Nigeria*. Ikeja, Longman Group limited.

Richard, M. F, & Rebecca, B. (2003). Learning by doing. *Chemical Engineering Education Journal*, 37, (4), 282-283.

Salawu, B. (2010). Ethno-religion conflicts in Nigeria: Causal analysis and proposals for new management strategies. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 13,(3) 345- 353.

United Nation (2002). Women, peace and security. USA, United Nations Publication

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind and society: the development of higher mental processes. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

Young, I. S., & Aileen, M. (1998). Korean American women from tradition to modern. USA. Greenwood Publishing Group. Retrieved from www.greenwood.com/catalog/c5977.aspxtradition