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## Some Teacher and Vocational Variables as Correlates of Attitudes to Social Studies Teaching at the Basic Education Level in Southern Nigeria

Dr. F.V. Falaye and Dr. E.A. Okwilagwe (Pg.11)

### Abstract

Studies on attitudes have focused mainly on the role they play in students' learning and achievement. This study investigated teachers' attitudes, since teachers form an important component of any educational system. Specifically, the study focused on some teacher and vocational variables as they influence teachers' attitudes to teaching Social Studies at the basic level of education. The study was carried out in the three geo-political zones that make up southern Nigeria. The sample consisted of 903 primary school teachers made up of 383 males and 520 female. One instrument developed and validated by the researchers was used for data collection. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and chi-square statistics. Findings reveal that the teachers seem to be negatively predisposed to teaching Social Studies. Also, while gender and geographical zones of respondents influenced the attitudes of practising primary school teachers to teaching Social Studies, age did not. Unexpectedly, findings also show that a large proportion of professionally trained teachers are negatively predisposed to teaching Social Studies. This has implications for teacher training and development. Suggestions were made towards improving teachers' attitudes and invariably improving teaching effectiveness in Social Studies at the basic level of education in Nigeria.

### Introduction

Attitude, which is an individual's prevailing tendency to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, which could be a person or group of people, institutions or events Barros & Elia, (1998), is an important aspect of teaching - learning. Richardson (1996) posits that attitudes and beliefs are a subset of a group of constructs that name, define and describe the structure and content of mental states that are thought to drive a person's actions. Attitudes can be positive or negative having three major components: the cognitive, affective and behavioural components (Oppenheim, 1966; Obemeata, 1984). These three components appear to mould an individual's viewpoint through interaction with the society either directly or indirectly.

In the educational setting, attitude is an important component that influences learning outcomes. Researchers and educationists affirm that attitude is as important as intelligence in influencing students' achievement (Obemeata, 1984 & William, 1998). Many studies have revealed that the development of the right attitude towards learning has significantly increased students' cognitive achievement,

virtually in all disciplines (Astin, 1993; Price, Price & William, 1998; Pelemo, 1995; Onafowokan, 1997). In the same vein, attitudes held by teachers influence their classroom behaviour, which invariably impact on students' learning and attitude development.

This study, unlike very many others which investigated the role of attitude in learning and achievement, looks at teachers' attitude. Since teachers form an important component of the educational system, their attitudes either positively or negatively influence the teaching and learning process. A teacher's attitude and actions can leave lasting impressions and invariably sharpen students' attitude and performances, and can influence their immediate and future decisions. Gourneau (2005) identified five attitudes of teachers that are frequently discussed. These include teachers' kindness and care, willingness to involve students in classroom responsibility, sincerity to students diversity, motivation to provide meaningful learning experiences for all students and an enthusiasm for stimulating students' creativity. In another study, Akinsola (2002) found that teacher variables (gender, age, experience and attitude) predicted teacher anxiety in teaching mathematics. Of these variables, attitude of the teachers made the most significant contribution to the teaching of mathematics, while the other three variables were not significant. This



finding explains vividly, the moderating effect of teacher attitudes on students' attitudes, and subsequently their achievement in a subject.

What factors would generally modify teachers' attitudes towards teaching? Such factors as teachers' preparation, competences, self-concept, professional status and availability of infrastructure could impact on their attitude. A widely held opinion that teachers usually teach in the way they were taught highlights teachers' preparation as an important factor that sharpens teachers' attitudes towards teaching, which could also impact on their competencies and teaching styles. A poorly prepared teacher is likely to be deficient in the content, lacks confidence, and consequently be incompetent. These inadequacies no doubt affect the teacher's effectiveness in facilitating students' learning and achievement. For instance, practising primary school teachers reflected some significant positive changes in their attitudes after exposure to activity-oriented science and science method programmes, hence the programmes were recommended (Okpala & Onocha, 1985).

Even though there are a variety of factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic that influence teachers' attitudes to teaching, this study focused on teachers' experience, level of professional training, age, sex and environmental variables. Findings from the research, hopefully would inform and guide the policy and practice of pre-service teachers' training programme, ultimately ensuring the production of competent and effective teachers, particularly in the core subjects such as Social Studies.

### Research Questions

1. What is the profile of teachers' attitude to teaching Social Studies at the basic level of education?
2. Are there any group differences in teachers' attitude to teaching Social Studies at the basic level of education on the basis of their
  - (a) Age
  - (b) Gender
  - (c) Qualification

- (d) Experience and
- (e) Geo-political zone?

### Methodology

#### Design

The study was a survey with some elements of the ex-post facto type of research. The ex-post facto was considered appropriate because the variables of interest had already manifested and no attempt was made to manipulate them.

#### Sample

The sample for the study comprised of practising primary school teachers in Southern Nigeria, selected using multi-stage, stratified sampling procedure. In the first stage, the existing three geo-political zones of South-east, South-west and South-south were selected from the six-geo-political zones in the country. Two states selected from each zone comprised the second stage. At the third stage, all the Local Government Areas (LGAs) in each state participated, from which 5 teachers per school were selected. A total of 903 teachers (520 females and 383 males) were finally selected using a probability – proportional to size sampling method. There were 241 teachers selected from the South-south zone, 340 from the south-east zone and 322 from the South west zone.

#### Instrumentation

A questionnaire was designed to elicit information from respondents. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A sought for respondents' background information such as gender, age, qualification, teaching experience and state of assignment. Section B elicited information on attitude to different aspects of Social Studies teaching in schools. Respondents rated the items on a 4-point Likert scale.

The validity and reliability properties of the instrument yielded a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.83.

#### Analysis

The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential (such as frequency count) and Chi-square statistics.

## Results and Discussion

Table 1: Profile of Teachers' Attitude to Teaching of Social Studies

| Item | Statement  | % of Agreement | % of Disagreement |
|------|--|----------------|-------------------|
| 1.   | Enjoying teaching of Social Studies  | 2.6            | 95.9              |
| 2.   | Making Social Studies teaching more interesting through excursion                  | 14.5           | 83.8              |
| 3.   | Social Studies is best taught using lecture method                                 | 82.5           | 15.7              |
| 4.   | Dislike for giving frequent tests in Social Studies                                | 70.8           | 15.7              |
| 5.   | Willingness to attend any improvement course in methods of teaching Social Studies | 5.2            | 92.9              |
| 6.   | Preference to teaching other subjects instead of social studies                    | 64.0           | 35.1              |
| 7.   | Dislike for giving projects/class work in social studies                           | 77.5           | 17.6              |
| 8.   | Trying out new methods of teaching Social Studies always                           | 11.3           | 85.3              |
| 9.   | Devoting more time to the teaching of difficult topics in social studies           | 17.5           | 78.8              |
| 10.  | Effective teaching of Social Studies contents without learning materials           | 83.9           | 14.5              |
| 11.  | Need to retraining to teach Social Studies effectively                             | 82.5           | 13.1              |
| 12.  | Only specialists can teach Social Studies effectively                              | 45.0           | 51.8              |
| 13.  | Teach only those areas that are interesting  | 82.6           | 12.2              |
| 14.  | Anybody can teach Social Studies   | 72.1           | 24.1              |
| 15.  | Test items should reflect only easy topics so that pupils can pass well            | 84.7           | 13.7              |
| 16.  | Encouraging pupils who show anti-social behaviour                                  | 57.4           | 41.0              |
| 17.  | Teaching Social Studies should not be concerned with attitudinal change            | 69.7           | 28.0              |

Table 1 shows the attitude profile of Social Studies teachers. From our observation, these practising teachers seem to be negatively predisposed to teaching social studies as indicated by their responses to all the items raised in this study except items 6 and 16 (please refer to Table I for the item description).

Table 2: Age as a Grouping Factor

| Item No | Agree    | Disagree | Agree | Total | X <sup>2</sup> |
|---------|----------|----------|-------|-------|----------------|
| 9       | Below 30 | 99       | 7     | 106   | 11.76*         |
|         | 31-45    | 620      | 158   | 779   |                |
|         | Above 46 | 22       | 4     | 26    |                |
|         | Total    | 741      | 169   | 911   |                |
| 12      | Below 30 | 73       | 33    | 106   | 9.551*         |
|         | 31-45    | 413      | 366   | 779   |                |
|         | Above 46 | 15       | 11    | 26    |                |
|         | Total    | 510      | 410   | 911   |                |
| 17      | Below 30 | 64       | 42    | 106   | 8.204*         |
|         | 31-45    | 572      | 207   | 779   |                |
|         | Above 46 | 20       | 6     | 26    |                |
|         | Total    | 656      | 255   | 911   |                |

\* Significant at P. 0.5, non-directional (2 tail test)



Tables 2-5 present the group differences in the teaching of social studies. On the basis of age, the teachers were grouped into three i.e. below 30 years, 31-45 years and above 45 years. Results indicate that age as a factor did not influence the attitude of practising primary school teachers to teaching Social Studies for all

the items, except for items 9, 12 and 17. These items sought for the teachers' disposition about "devoting more time to teaching difficult Social Studies topics, that "only specialists could teach Social Studies effectively" and "teaching Social Studies should be concerned with attitudinal change" in learners.

Table 3: Gender as a Discriminating Factor

| Item No | Gender | Disagree | Agree | Total |        |
|---------|--------|----------|-------|-------|--------|
| 2       | Male   | 349      | 42    | 391   | 7.77*  |
|         | Female | 430      | 90    | 520   |        |
|         | Total  | 779      | 132   | 911   |        |
| 6       | Male   | 238      | 153   | 391   | 5.10*  |
|         | Female | 354      | 166   | 520   |        |
|         | Total  | 595      | 319   | 911   |        |
| 14      | Male   | 325      | 66    | 391   | 19.76* |
|         | Female | 366      | 154   | 520   |        |
|         | Total  | 691      | 220   | 911   |        |

\* Significant at  $P \leq 0.5$ , non-directional (2 tail test)

With regard to gender factor, the results (Table 3) indicate that gender significantly discriminated between male and female teachers with respect to three items. These were their predisposition to "making Social Studies more interesting through excursion" (item 2), "preference for teaching other subjects instead of Social Studies (item 6) and the idea that "Social Studies can be taught by any person in the school" (item 14).

Teachers were grouped according to their qualification (professional training) into 3, that

is, NCE holders, B.Ed. graduates and others (those with lower and/or without teaching qualification). Teaching qualification was observed to significantly differentiate among these practising teachers with respect, to 7 items only. Table 4 indicates that a large proportion of these professionally trained teachers, are negatively predisposed to teaching Social Studies especially with respect to items (3, 7, 8, 12, 14, 16 and 17) (refer to Table 1 for the items description).



**Table 4: Qualification as a Grouping Factor**

| Item No | Qualification | Disagree | Agree | Total |         |
|---------|---------------|----------|-------|-------|---------|
| 3       | NCE           | 430      | 104   | 534   | 15.344* |
|         | B.Ed          | 275      | 28    | 303   |         |
|         | Others        | 62       | 11    | 74    |         |
|         | Total         | 768      | 143   | 911   |         |
| 7       | NCE           | 426      | 108   | 534   | 8.982*  |
|         | B.Ed          | 266      | 37    | 303   |         |
|         | Others        | 59       | 15    | 74    |         |
|         | Total         | 751      | 160   | 911   |         |
| 9       | NCE           | 443      | 90    | 534   | 8.982*  |
|         | B.Ed          | 234      | 69    | 303   |         |
|         | Others        | 64       | 10    | 74    |         |
|         | Total         | 772      | 139   | 911   |         |
| 12      | NCE           | 308      | 226   | 534   | 13.728* |
|         | B.Ed          | 143      | 160   | 303   |         |
|         | Others        | 50       | 24    | 74    |         |
|         | Total         | 501      | 410   | 911   |         |
| 15      | NCE           | 448      | 86    | 534   | 8.87*   |
|         | B.Ed          | 276      | 27    | 303   |         |
|         | Others        | 62       | 12    | 74    |         |
|         | Total         | 786      | 125   | 911   |         |
| 16      | NCE           | 236      | 298   | 534   | 9.929*  |
|         | B.Ed          | 111      | 192   | 303   |         |
|         | Others        | 41       | 33    | 74    |         |
|         | Total         | 388      | 523   | 911   |         |
| 17      | NCE           | 374      | 160   | 534   | 6.998*  |
|         | B.Ed          | 234      | 69    | 303   |         |
|         | Others        | 48       | 26    | 74    |         |
|         | Total         | 656      | 255   | 911   |         |

**Table 5: Experience as a Grouping Factor**

| Item No | T. Exp    | Disagree | Agree | Total | X <sup>2</sup> |
|---------|-----------|----------|-------|-------|----------------|
| 12      | 0-9 yrs   | 134      | 88    | 222   | 20.050*        |
|         | 10-21 yrs | 262      | 182   | 444   |                |
|         | 22-35 yrs | 105      | 140   | 245   |                |
|         | Total     | 501      | 410   | 911   |                |

The teachers were equally categorized according to their experience. In this wise, three categories 0-9 years, 10-21 years, 22 years and above were obtained. It was the assumption here that a trained teacher in most cases takes as long as 7-9 years before being entrusted with any other serious responsibility aside teaching in the

school system. Below this level, they are considered as young teachers. However, teachers of above 10 years experience are usually entrusted with some form of responsibilities such as performing the duties of head teachers, from supervisors, assistant head teacher and so on. It was observed that the factor of



experience was only significant with respect to item 12 (“the fact that only specialists can teach

Social Studies effectively”). All other items were not significant. Table 5 presents this fact.

**Table 6: Geopolitical Zone as a Grouping Factor**

| Item No | Zones | Disagree | Agree | Total | X <sup>2</sup> |
|---------|-------|----------|-------|-------|----------------|
| 1       | SS    | 239      | 02    | 241   | 10.69*         |
|         | SE    | 338      | 6     | 344   |                |
|         | SW    | 310      | 16    | 326   |                |
|         | Total | 887      | 24    | 911   |                |
| 2       | SS    | 190      | 51    | 241   | 12.34*         |
|         | SE    | 299      | 45    | 344   |                |
|         | SW    | 290      | 36    | 326   |                |
|         | Total | 779      | 132   | 911   |                |
| 3       | SS    | 214      | 27    | 241   | 30.06*         |
|         | SE    | 308      | 36    | 344   |                |
|         | SW    | 246      | 80    | 326   |                |
|         | Total | 768      | 143   | 911   |                |
| 4       | SS    | 171      | 70    | 241   | 14.66*         |
|         | SE    | 288      | 56    | 344   |                |
|         | SW    | 244      | 82    | 326   |                |
|         | Total | 703      | 208   | 911   |                |
| 5       | SS    | 235      | 6     | 241   | 10.08*         |
|         | SE    | 330      | 14    | 344   |                |
|         | SW    | 299      | 27    | 326   |                |
|         | Total | 864      | 47    | 911   |                |
| 6       | SS    | 164      | 77    | 241   | 14.35*         |
|         | SE    | 242      | 102   | 344   |                |
|         | SW    | 186      | 140   | 326   |                |
|         | Total | 592      | 319   | 911   |                |
| 7       | SS    | 189      | 52    | 241   | 16.21*         |
|         | SE    | 306      | 38    | 344   |                |
|         | SW    | 256      | 70    | 326   |                |
|         | Total | 751      | 160   | 911   |                |
| 8       | SS    | 219      | 22    | 241   | 15.70*         |
|         | SE    | 303      | 41    | 344   |                |
|         | SW    | 286      | 40    | 326   |                |
|         | Total | 808      | 103   | 911   |                |
| 9       | SS    | 214      | 27    | 241   | 25.66*         |
|         | SE    | 311      | 33    | 344   |                |
|         | SW    | 253      | 73    | 326   |                |
|         | Total | 778      | 133   | 911   |                |
| 10      | SS    | 213      | 28    | 241   | 9.18*          |
|         | SE    | 310      | 34    | 344   |                |
|         | SW    | 269      | 57    | 326   |                |
|         | Total | 792      | 119   | 911   |                |
| 11      | SS    | 148      | 93    | 241   | 7.09*          |
|         | SE    | 173      | 171   | 344   |                |



|    |       |     |     |     |        |
|----|-------|-----|-----|-----|--------|
|    | SW    | 180 | 146 | 326 |        |
|    | Total | 501 | 401 | 911 |        |
| 12 | SS    | 212 | 29  | 241 | 18.30* |
|    | SE    | 320 | 24  | 344 |        |
|    | SW    | 268 | 58  | 326 |        |
|    | Total | 800 | 111 | 911 |        |
| 13 | SS    | 219 | 22  | 241 | 25.79* |
|    | SE    | 311 | 33  | 344 |        |
|    | SW    | 256 | 70  | 326 |        |
|    | Total | 786 | 125 | 911 |        |
| 13 | SS    | 110 | 131 | 241 | 11.75* |
|    | SE    | 122 | 222 | 344 |        |
|    | SW    | 156 | 170 | 326 |        |
|    | Total | 388 | 523 | 911 |        |

With geo-political zone as a factor, teachers from each of the 3 geopolitical zones in Southern Nigeria, formed respective groups. From our observation, this factor virtually discriminated difficult Social Studies topic (item 9), that "social studies can be taught by any person in the school" (item 14) and "teaching Social Studies should not be concerned with affecting attitudinal change in learners" (item 17).

### Discussion

The Social Studies teachers who participated in this study seemed to indicate moderate to high negative disposition to the teaching of Social Studies at the basic education level in Southern Nigeria. The items, where at least 51% of the teachers revealed that they possessed negative attitude were: enjoying the teaching of Social Studies (item 1); making the teaching of Social Studies more interesting through excursion (item 2); Social Studies is best taught using lecture methods (item 3); dislike for giving frequent tests in Social Studies (item 4); preference to teaching other subjects instead of Social Studies (item 6); dislike for giving projects/work in Social Studies (item 7); trying out new methods of teaching social studies always (item 8); devoting more time to the teaching of difficult topics in social studies (item 9); effective teaching of Social Studies contents without learning materials (item 10); need to retraining to teach Social Studies effectively (item 11); only specialists can teach social studies effectively (item 12); teach only those

among the attitudinal disposition of the teachers for all except three of the items. The items that did not discriminate were "devoting more time to teaching

areas that are interesting (item 13); anybody can teach social studies (item 14); test items should reflect only easy topics so that pupils can pass well (item 15); teaching of Social Studies should not be concerned with attitudinal change (item 17)

Attitude by its nature is learnt and once held, it is difficult to change. It is disheartening that these practising teachers agreed with all negative items and disagreed with all positive items of the measuring instrument. This nature of the findings is not too surprising since many trainee teachers whom these researchers had interacted with during the course of supervising teaching practice exercises across many states of Nigeria revealed that they enrolled for Social Studies course because it did not have any special entry prerequisite as in other subjects. In some cases trainee teachers enrolled for Social Studies after they had been rejected by other departments of their choice, thereby making Social Studies an 'all-comer' course. The poor attitudes of teachers could also be traceable to irregularity in payment of teachers' salaries leading to low motivation of teachers (FME/UNICEF/UNESCO, 2003). Findings in this study, in terms of the negative attitudes held by teachers as observed, is not peculiar to Social Studies. Previous studies such as Adegroye (1999) observed similar findings with respect to the attitude of Mathematics teachers towards their jobs, roles and expectations. According to Adegroye (1999), the teachers only seem to perform these duties when



compelled, especially when they are aware that there are impending inspection and monitoring visits by government officials. Also, the findings of this research corroborate those of other studies in the field with particular reference to teacher competence in terms of mastery of subject matter. The works that lend credence here are those of McNamara (1991) who is of the view that teachers with limited knowledge in a subject area are most likely to avoid teaching certain topics and fail to challenge misconceptions, discourage student interaction, as well as increase teacher reliance on textbooks (Lee, 1995). The implication of these findings threatens the teaching of Social Studies at the basic education level because as high as 61% of the teachers would prefer teaching other subjects in the schools curriculum instead of Social Studies. It is doubtful if they will not retard the desired progress in the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme that has just been proliferated in all schools in Nigeria. The nature of Social Studies education is such that it is the only subject at the lower level of education that can effect citizenship education and inculcate values, attitudinal change and re-engineering of value-reorientation in a country that is seeking global reception and recognition, in the comity of nations.

Other findings of this study indicate that significant differences exist in the teachers' attitude to teaching, based on gender, age, experience, professional training and geopolitical zones. These areas of significant differences border on teacher personal characteristics and their professional training.

### Conclusion

Social Studies occupies a unique position among secondary school subjects as it deals with man's interactions with his environment and the reciprocal relationships between man and the various aspects of man's environment. Perhaps it is a subject that is most suited to providing young persons with skills to tackle societal problems, inculcating the spirit of citizenship and patriotism, and invariably making them become socially responsible citizens. Therefore, Social Studies teachers have a unique role to play in nurturing the learner.

And to do these effectively the teacher must have a good mastery of the Social Studies content and be skillful in facilitating the content. Above all, the teacher must have the right attitudes to teaching Social Studies for effective learning and meeting the overall goal of Social Studies.

### Recommendations

In the light of the findings emanating from this research and the ensuing discussion, we share the view that the way forward in improving teaching effectiveness in social studies classes at the basic level, include the following:

- (i) Trainee teachers should be encouraged by the school administration to enroll and major in subjects of their choice and interest since interest in a subject bears directly on commitment to the subject and by implication, commitment impacts directly on effectiveness which invariably impact on students' achievement.
- (ii) Policy makers, teacher trainers and supervisory agencies at the basic education level, should initiate and develop instruments that would sample teachers' attitude at the point of employment, as this will go a long way in easing out those who see the teaching profession as a dumping ground. This will ensure that good hands are employed to teach Social Studies.
- (iii) Practising teachers generally and those of Social Studies in particular, should be motivated by their respective state employers in terms of regular payment of salaries, promotion as at when due and provision of conducive teaching-learning environments. These will encourage them and re-orientate their attitudes in a positive direction.



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