

Full Length Research Paper

Creative Expression and Pupils' Academic Performance in Social Studies in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State

Princewill Okechukwu Ejekwu (Ph.D)

Early Childhood and Primary Education Department Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. Email address: princeejekwu123@gmail.com

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The study examined the connection between creative expression and pupils' academic performance in social studies in public primary schools in the study area. Two hypotheses guided the study. The study employed the correlational research design. The population of the study was 1,506 respondents, and the sample for the study was 300 using simple random sampling technique. The researcher designed questionnaire was used for data collection. Data was analyzed under the consideration of Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. According to the report of this research, there seems to be a substantial link between divergent thinking and pupils' academic performance in social studies in public primary schools in the study area; there is a substantial connection between problem-solving ability and pupils' academic performance in social studies in public primary schools in the study area. On the basis of the report's results, recommendations were made which include that the government should ensure that the educational system is structured in such a manner as to allow for creative expression of children in the classroom.

Key words: Creativity, Problem-solving, Divergent thinking, Social studies, Academic performance

INTRODUCTION

Social studies as an encompassing subject in the school curriculum is designed to produce well informed citizens who appreciate the culture of the people and the ethos of governance within the society. Social studies education is hoped to be of immense value to the students because of the totality of their education. The subject helps to train the students to think deeply and critically and assess both economic and social issues in the society as they arise (Dada, Titus & Adu, 2016). Because of the multi-disciplinary nature of social studies, it enables the students to formulate sound judgment, draw reasonable conclusions and make the right decisions on their day-to-day activities.

According to Lambdin (2009), the demand for social studies on students grows as they advance through school and begin their adult lives at home and at work. Students must have a firm foundation in social studies in order to function in a socially literate manner in the future. A solid foundation entails far more than rote application of

procedural knowledge. In Social studies, all students should be able to understand, make sense of, and use social skills, as well as create connections between subjects and see patterns. Creative expression is one of the channels whereby pupils can be able to achieve this.

Creativity in children refers to the practical application of knowledge, imaginations and skills in new ways which is geared toward the production of outcomes that are both unique and of value (Obinaju & Ekeh, 2012). The process of creating original ideas through inquiry and discovery is the emphasis of creative activity. Rather than being concerned with the completed product, children's creativity emerges from their experiences with the process. Creativity is not the same as talent, skill, or intelligence. Creativity is about thinking, investigating, discovering, and imagining rather than accomplishing something better than others (Sharp, 2004). Creative learning is concerned with the manner a child actively participates and trusts their own learning abilities to make

decisions and make choices. This can be accomplished by creating an innovative environment that encourages play-based investigation and rewards creative achievements.

Developing a child's creative mind and opportunities for imaginative play; traditional innovative arts; music, dance, and movement; and areas of learning such as social studies, problem solving, and exploration are all examples of ways to promote creativity and creative learning (Sharp, 2004). Mellou (1996) contends that a child's creativity can be fostered in three ways by educational settings: the creative environment, creative programs, and creative teachers and instructional methods.

Divergent thinking, while not synonymous with creativity, has important implications for creative aptitude and can be used to measure the capacity for innovative problem solving and ideation (Runco, 2010). Divergent thinking is one predictor of creative ability (Runco, 2010). Divergent thinking replies with a high level of fluency (number of responses), originality (newness of responses), flexibility (diversity of conceptual categories of responses), and elaboration (degree of embellishment of responses) are regarded to have a higher chance of generating innovative ideas (Runco & Acar, 2012). Divergent thinking is intended to produce numerous diverse answers or to think outside the box. The development of alternative ideas, as assessed in the Alternative Uses Task, is one of its most common evaluations (Guilford, 2017). Since it is widely acknowledged that creativity encompasses both divergent and convergent thinking, the latter is occasionally referred to as uncreative (Ritter and Ferguson, 2017), and earlier research has identified divergent thinking as a broadly recognized measure of creativity (Kenett et al., 2014).

Several scientific studies have found a significant link between diverse thinking and academic achievement (Preckel, Holling & Wies, 2006). Based on this, it is possible to argue that divergent thinking in the form of fluency, flexibility, and originality contributes to and interacts with convergent thought in the enhancement of academic accomplishment (Chauhan, 2014). The ability to think of practical solutions to various problem scenarios is referred to as problem solving ability, and it entails recognizing the nature of the problem by examining the causes and seeking for potential remedies (KIE, 2008). Problem-solving abilities assist students in dealing with a variety of obstacles and demands in their lives, as well as accepting responsibility for their actions. Problem solving skill is seen as a coping method that improves general competence and adaption in the actual world. Many of the student's daily activities require some form of problem solving (Antoni & Albert, 2004).

Problem-solving skills, according to Rafique (2005), involve clarifying the problem's description, identifying

causes, discovering options, evaluating each option, picking one, executing it, and evaluating whether the problem is solved or not. Making associations is a feature of the brainstorming problem-solving process, which combines a casual, informal problem-solving approach with lateral thinking. In a group context, brainstorming is preferable to traditional group issue solving since it creates more ideas (Paulus, 2000).

A problem-solving method in which an issue is broken down into smaller sub-problems and the solutions to the sub-problems provide a solution to the main problem is known as divide and conquer. The splitting technique is repeated until a problem is found that is small enough to be easily solved. Because it involves learning by doing, research is also considered as an efficient approach of problem solving. An individual or a group of people recognize a problem, take steps to solve it, evaluate their success, and try again if necessary (Brian, 2018).

In social studies class in primary schools, the students' way of learning is derived from the master: the instructor demonstrates a technique with examples, which the students subsequently apply to comparable issues. However, students' creativity, which stimulates divergent thinking and creates a supportive and constitutive learning environment, can have a favorable impact on their academic success. Apart from teaching social concepts, social studies curricula also help students learn to solve problems in order to learn and use social studies effectively, as well as develop social process skills (communication, reasoning, and association), affective skills, psychomotor skills, and basic skills like information and communication technologies. Social studies is a fluid realm in which the essential is the creative application of social studies knowledge in the solving of issues, rather than a set body of knowledge to be acquired (Mann, 2005). There has been a shift in educational policy around the world over the last few decades, with an emphasis on integrating creativity and subject matter understanding (Dickhut, 2003). All subjects in school, as well as all realms of knowledge, give opportunities for creative expression. It isn't restricted to a particular domain (Allien, 2003). As a result, all social studies curricula should include creativity as a component.

According to Hong and Milgram (2010), the educational environment in which students are placed can alter their understanding that they are capable of and competent to think creatively. Teachers are widely acknowledged to be an important component in fostering students' creative thinking in social studies (Nadjafikhah et al., 2012).

Similarly, Nwazuoke, Olatoye, and Oyundoyin (2002) asserted that a child's environment might either foster or hinder creativity. Even if a child is born with a natural or genetic ability for creativity, parents and teachers may help them develop and nurture it. Family support, learning materials availability, and social influences are all factors that influence the development of creativity,

according to Dingleline (2003). According to these findings, learners' intrinsic drive to be creative may be inhibited if education, evaluation, and the social environment do not support creative thinking.

Akinboye (2003) claims that people who lack creativity are unable to access the full range of accessible information and resources because they are locked in old habits, structures, patterns, thoughts, and viewpoints. As a result, every sustainable development education must start with creativity, generative vision, constructive and design thinking, and innovation. Intellectual activity, knowledge, motivation, thinking patterns, personality, and environment all combine to produce creativity. Creativity and intellectual activities must go hand in hand. Our educational system has a problem in that pupils are not trained in a way that encourages creative thinking, and evaluation systems do not reward originality. This is a significant problem for our educational system, particularly basic education, which should foster exposure to creative skills that can be strengthened through creative thinking. As a result, the study will seek to investigate the link between students' creativity and academic achievement in social studies at public primary schools in the study area.

Statement of the Problem

The learning and performance of pupils in social studies at the primary school level prepares them for the learning of social studies in related courses at the tertiary level of education. Performance in social studies in the primary school has not been encouraging. This poor achievement could be attributed to ineffective method of teaching. One of the objectives of the primary education is the inculcation of social norms. Unfortunately, the practice in classrooms today seem to be a deviation from the principles of creative play (which include divergent thinking, problem-solving ability and innovation) hence the teaching of social studies in the public primary school has been more of a formal teaching where the pupils are taught in the same manner as those in secondary schools, and this without making the teaching/learning pupil-centered. Consequent upon, this the study tends to find answer to the questions: does any relationship exist between pupils' creativity and academic performance in social studies in public primary schools in the study area?

Purpose of the study

The drive of the study is to determine the connection between pupils' creativity and academic performance in social studies in public primary schools in the study area. Specifically, the study will:

1. Examine the link between divergent thinking and pupils' academic performance in social studies in public

primary schools in the study area.

2. Determine the link between problem-solving ability and pupils' academic performance in social studies in public primary schools in the study area.

Research hypotheses

At 0.05 level of significance, the following null hypotheses were tested:

1. In the study area, there is no significant link between divergent thinking and pupils' academic performance in social studies in public primary schools.
2. In the study area, there is no significant link between problem-solving ability and pupils' academic performance in social studies in public primary.

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using a correlational research approach. This design was considered appropriate for the study since the variables were examined to determine their relationship. 1,506 basic five pupils in public primary schools in the study area made up the population for the study. 300 basic five pupils constituted the sample size who were chosen using simple random sampling technique. The instruments for data collection were the researcher designed questionnaire titled "Pupils' Creativity and Academic Performance in Social Studies Questionnaire (PCAPSSQ)" and pupils' performance test in social studies. The instrument was validated by two lecturers in the department of Early Childhood and Primary Education Studies, Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education in order to ascertain its face validity. The correlation index of the instrument was found to be 0.67, which shows that the instrument was reliable for the study. The data collected was analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

Results and findings

Null hypothesis one: There is no substantial link between divergent thinking and pupils' academic performance in social studies in public primary schools in the study area.

Table 1 shows that at 298 degree of freedom and .05 alpha level, the crucial correlation coefficient from databases is 0.139. The null hypothesis is rejected since r_{cal} is bigger than r_{crit} . As a result there is a link connecting divergent thinking and pupils' academic performance in social studies in public primary schools in the study area.

Null hypothesis two: There is no substantial link

Table 1: Description of PPMC Substantial Correlation Test between divergent thinking and pupils' academic performance

Variables	$\frac{\sum X}{\sum Y}$	$\frac{\sum X^2}{\sum Y^2}$	$\sum XY$	r_{cal}	df	r_{crit}	Decision
Divergent thinking	840	2528	4006	0.35	298	0.139	Reject Null Hypothesis
Pupils' academic performance	1437	6957					

Significant @ .05 alpha level

Table 2: The results of the PPMC Substantial Correlation Test between problem-solving ability and pupils' academic performance are summarized below

	$\frac{\sum X}{\sum Y}$	$\frac{\sum X^2}{\sum Y^2}$	$\sum XY$	r_{cal}	Df	r_{crit}	Decision
Problem-solving ability	729	1865	3437	0.81	298	0.139	Reject Null Hypothesis
Pupils' academic performance	1418	6824					

Significant @ .05 alpha level

connecting problem-solving ability and pupils' academic performance in social studies in public primary schools in the study area.

Table 2 shows that the crucial r value is 0.139 with 298 degrees of freedom and .05 alpha level. The null hypothesis is rejected since the r_{cal} is bigger than the r_{crit} . As a consequence, problem-solving ability has a significant impact on pupils' academic performance in social studies in public primary schools in the study area.

Discussion of findings

Table 1 demonstrates that the crucial r value is less than the computed r value at 298 degrees of freedom and .05 alpha level, indicating that the null hypothesis is rejected. As a result, there's a substantial link between divergent thinking and pupils' academic performance in social studies in public primary schools in the study area. The findings of the study support the views of Chauhan (2014), who suggests that Divergent thinking in the form of fluency, flexibility, and originality, contributes to and interacts with convergent thinking in the enhancement of academic accomplishment. The finding of the study also supports the findings of Getzel and Jackson (2012) who found that the academic performance of highly divergent and highly intelligent students was good on tests.

The results in table 2 show that the r_{cal} is bigger than the r_{crit} , implying that the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, problem-solving ability does relate significantly to pupils' academic performance in social studies in public primary schools in the study area. This study is consistent with Mason's (2003) findings that learners' problem-solving beliefs are crucial, noting that as pupils' problem-solving beliefs increase, so will their accomplishment. The finding also agrees with the findings of Antoni and Albert (2019) who found that problem solving ability significantly predicts academic performance.

CONCLUSION

The pupils' creativity plays significant roles in the academic performance of the pupils in the classroom. The applications of the creative abilities in the pupils contribute immensely in pupils' active participation in the classroom teaching and learning experience. Divergent thinking, problem-solving ability and innovation play significant roles in the academic achievement of pupils.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations were made based on the findings and conclusions:

1. The government should ensure that the educational system is structured in such a manner as to allow for creative expression of children in the classroom.
2. The classroom teacher should ensure that pupils are allowed to express themselves creatively in the classroom since this has a ripple effect on the learning and performance of the pupils in the classroom.
3. The school heads should organize yearly creativity week to allow pupils showcases their creative abilities.

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