

Social Studies Specialists' Teachers' Knowledge Acquisition on Environmental Education in Junior Secondary Schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study investigated the knowledge acquisition of Social Studies teachers (specialists) teach on Environmental Education in junior Secondary Schools in Ekiti State. The population comprised all Social Studies teachers in junior Secondary Schools in Ekiti State. A sample of one hundred and twenty-five Social Studies teachers who were randomly selected responded to items in an instrument designed to obtain their views on the subject matter. The instrument was structured and consisted of twenty (20) items which resolved on Social Studies teachers' knowledge and attitude to environmental education. The research questions raised were analysed using simple percentages, the t-test statistic was used to test the null hypotheses tested at $P=0.05$ level of significance. The result indicated that Social Studies teacher specialists disposed positive attitude towards the teaching of Environmental Education unlike the non-specialist Social Studies teachers. The reason had been that the Social Studies specialists are vast in the knowledge of the subject matter. It was concluded by recommending that the school authorities should entrust the teaching of all social studies concepts such as Environmental Education to the hands of only Social Studies specialist teachers.

Keywords: Social Studies Teachers, Environmental Education, Knowledge, Junior Secondary School Specialist, Attitude

Introduction

In recent decades, the world has witnessed serious environmental disasters, and we can see signs of despoliation almost everywhere including Nigeria, our air, our water and our land are being polluted, whether we live in the rural or urban area of the country. Waste products such as toxic chemicals, noxious odours are noticed in concentrated industrial areas spilling to residential yard and basement. Our environment is rapidly changing as a result of some human activities on the surface of our environment, all this has caused a lot of problems. Bosah (2013) concluded that all the changes were responsible to overall changes and emanated from all facet of life such as economic, social and health sectors.

Environmental Education has been the important issues to discuss due to the world's environmental problems among which are climate change, global warming, deforestation, and pollution and a host of others (Sujata, 2021). Environmental Education as one of the recent subjects emerged shortly after independence was greatly concerned about air, water pollution, depletion of natural resources and environmental degradation (Sujata, 2021). The above definition centre on giving citizens the right knowledge about the environment and its attendant problem and how to proffer solutions to them.

Environmental Education can be referred to as an organized efforts geared towards teaching functioning of natural environment and how to handle the resources in the ecosystem. It is a learning process that increases people's knowledge and awareness about the environment and its associated challenges and fosters attitude, motivation and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible actions (Stohr, 2013). According to Carter and Simmons (2010), Environmental Education is a powerful educational tool with a complex.

Richard (2006) opined that the chemical company knew as early as 1958 that toxic chemical was seeping into homes and a school playground which was a threat to human health. In order to maintain healthy atmospheric condition in our surrounding, there will be the need to study the inter-relationship between people, activities and their environment. According to Barry (1971) everything is connected else, that is the inter-relationship between people and their environment focus on how the physical environment shapes peoples live and on how people influence the surrounding environment.

Riley (2002) posited that the natural environment performs three basic functions for human as it does for many animals' species that is; the environment provides the resources essential for life such as air, water, and materials used to create shelter, transportation and needed products. Also it serves as a waste repository i.e. where we dump our waste products. Environment "houses" our species that is our home, our living space, the places where we reside, work and play.

It is obvious that the three basic functions mentioned above are very vital to, man existence on earth in that if human societies exhaust or misused these natural resources or deposit huge quantity and variety of waste products than the one environment can safely absorb, it will finally distort the peaceful co-existence that exist between human being and the natural environment. It has been observed previously by the researchers that people take this truism for granted, but now one could see that day-to-day living conditions become unpleasant and difficult. Our air usually "heavy", tap water turns brown, in most cities chemicals do seep into neighbourhood.

Based on the above analyses, there is need to see why it is vital to live in a healthy environment. What then is this environment, the word "environment" has become a critical factor in world politics, social and economy. The ways of making it safe have assumed the centre stage in the United Nation Health Programmes. According to Agun (2004), Environment is the aggregate of all the external conditions and influences affecting life and development of an organism.

Akinbode (2002) posited that Environment is the totality of the places and the surrounding in which we live, work and interact with other people in our cultural, religious, political and socio-economic activities for self-fulfilment and the advancement of our communities, societies or nations.

Environment has always been a vital factor in the survival of human life. This environment simply refers to man's surrounding. It is very important to man because his very existence; comfort, work, food, transportation and a host of others are intimately tied to his environment (Durbin & Sanders, 1992). Ayodeji (2004) opined that the quality of human life to a large extent depends on the nature of give and take within the Environment, that is to say the Environment will give us back whatever we put into it either good or bad. In recent decades concern about the environment has increased many scholars with their volume of scholarly research and expositions, which indicated that the environment is being mismanaged and its diverse effects on human life are grievous by given evidence to this (Ayodeji, 2004).

This has brought about the study of this environment known as environmental studies, the scope is very wide, it includes the studies involving the degradation of the environment which constitutes threats to the well-being of human beings and its prevention. It also covers pollution of the environment and how to prevent it such as air, noise, water or land and it includes conservation of environmental resources like soil, water, forest, wild life as well as minerals. There is today the general awareness that man's environment is under serious threat and there is urgent need to curb this social menace hence the introduction of Environmental Education in our school curriculum.

What is Environmental Education?

According to Ibikunle-Johnson and Rugumgo (1987), environmental education is an integrated process which deals with man`s inter-relationship with nature and man- made surroundings. This is to provide awareness, concern and action that are needed for the protection and preservation of the environment.

African social and environmental studies programme (ASESP) (1993) defines “Environmental Education” as a process of learning and teaching knowledge and skills which enable us to understand and appreciate our surrounding and the inter-relationship between us, our society and the available resources. It is also a learning process that increases people knowledge and awareness about the environment and associated challenges, develops the necessary skills and expertise to address the challenges and fosters attitudes motivation and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible action (UNESCO: Tbilisi. Declaration, 1978). Environmental education though relatively new as a concept, but presently it has been integrated into some of social science subject such as Social Studies and teachers are being precluded to teach this subject both at secondary level and in tertiary institutions. Environmental Education can be defined as a process aimed at developing a world population that is aware of and concerned about the total environment and its associated problems.

Social studies as one of the subjects that houses environmental education can be defined as a programme of study in which the society uses to instil in students the knowledge, skills, attitude and actions considered important concerning the relationship human being has with each other, their world.[environment] and themselves (Kissork, 1981): Social Studies being a problem solving subject becomes an avenue through which a required knowledge, skills, attitude and actions considered important can be obtained to solve the ever increasing environment problems and enhance sustainable development. In order to achieve the above objective and other related ones, the concept environmental education needs to be handled by specialists or a qualified Social Studies teachers.

The quest for this research is further borne out of the fact that some schools appear not to be staffed with Social Studies qualified, experts and specialists’ teachers. The result is that, the teaching of Social Studies falls into the hands of unqualified teachers and this always, against the background of the erroneous belief that Social Studies is so simple and does not require an expert to teach it. By this, the expected skill, knowledge and attitude were not passed to the students or learners.

The purpose of this paper is to determine the influence of Social Studies teachers’ specialists on the teaching of Environmental Education in Junior Secondary Schools in Ekiti state.

Research Questions

These research questions were raised for the study

1. Is there any difference between the attitude of Social Studies teachers’ specialists and non-specialists’ teachers to environmental education?
2. Is there any difference between the knowledge of environmental education of Social studies teachers’ specialists and non-specialists’ Social studies teachers?

Research Hypothesis

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the attitude of Social Studies specialists and non-specialists’ teachers to environmental education.

HO₂: There is no significant difference between the knowledge of environmental education of specialist and non-specialist social studies teachers.

Research Method

Research Design

This is a descriptive research design of the survey type, the population for the study consisted of all Social Studies teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in Ekiti State.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample used for this study consisted one hundred and twenty-five Social Studies teachers selected from all junior secondary schools in Ekiti State through multi-stage stratified random sampling. In the process, five local governments were randomly selected from the sixteen local governments after which five schools from each local government were selected. In each of the schools, five Social Studies teachers were randomly selected.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for this study was a structured questionnaire designed by the researchers to elicit information from the respondents. The validity of the instrument were ascertained by some experts in test and measurement and Environmental Studies. The test re-test reliability method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument.

Data Collection

The researcher personally administered the research instrument on the study samples. Data collected were analysed using t-test statistical tool. The two hypothesis raised were tested at $p=0.05$ level of significant.

Data Analysis

After collecting the research instruments the data collected were analysed using percentage test with statistics. The two null hypothesis raised were tested at $p=0.05$ level of significance by using t-test as presented one after the other below.

Results

The results of the study were presented based on research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question 1

Is there any difference between the attitude of Social Studies specialists and non-specialist teachers to Environmental Education?

Table 1: Attitude of Social Studies specialist teachers to Environmental Education

	Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Specialist	Positive attitude	50	40
Non Specialist	Negative attitude	75	60
Total		125	100

Table 1 above shows that 40% of the respondents disposed, positive attitude towards the teaching of environmental education while 60% shows negative attitude to the concept of the Environmental Education. It implies that more than half of the respondents disposed negative attitude to Environmental Education.

Research Question 2

Is there any difference in the knowledge of Environmental Education between specialist and non-specialist Social Studies teachers?

Table 2: Knowledge of Social Studies Specialist Teachers on Environmental Education

	Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Specialist	High knowledge	46	36.8
Non specialist	Low knowledge	79	63.2
Total		125	100

Table 2 shows that 36.8% of the respondents have high knowledge of environmental education while 63.2% of the respondents possessed low knowledge of environmental education. It indicates that majority of the teachers handling social studies in secondary schools have low level in the knowledge of environmental education.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the attitude of specialist and non-specialist Social Studies teachers to Environmental Education.

Table 3: Summary of attitude of social studies specialist and non-specialist environmental education

Variable	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-table
Specialist	96	30.26	3.22	123	3.352	1.960
Non specialist	29	27.83	4.04			

Note: $P < 0.05$ (significant result)

The result in the table above showed that t-cal = (3-352) while t-table value is (1.960) at $P = 0.05$ level of significance. The t-cal is greater than the t-table value. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This showed that there was a significant difference between the attitude of Social Studies specialist and non-specialist teachers, the calculated mean showed that Social Studies specialist teachers disposed positive attitude to the teaching of Environmental Education in Ekiti State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the knowledge of Environmental Education of specialist and non-specialist social studies teachers.

Table 4: Summary of knowledge of Social Studies teachers' specialist and non-specialist to Environmental Education

Variable	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-table
Specialist	96	30.26	3.22	123	3.352	1.960
Non specialist	29	27.83	4.04			

Note: $P < 0.05$ (significant result)

The result in the table above showed that t-cal is (3.352) while t-table value is (1.960) at $P = 0.05$ level of significance. The t-cal is greater than the t-table value. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that, there is difference between the knowledge of specialist and non-specialist Social Studies teachers. The calculated means shows that Social Studies specialists possess special knowledge to the teaching of Environmental Education.

Discussion

The findings which was on Social Studies teacher specialist and non-specialist knowledge on Environmental Education showed that there was a significant difference between the attitude of Social Studies specialists and non-specialists to the teaching of environmental

education. This result confirms the view of Bodio and Pilana (1997) as they opined that the affective aspects of educational objectives include attitudes of teachers. This is very important in the sense that, it will reveal how teachers feel about themselves and the subject matter they are to teach; which is Environmental Education. It is crystal clear that there is a clear dichotomy between the attitude of Social Studies teacher specialists and non-specialists social studies teacher to environmental education.

Specialist teachers are those that major on Social Studies as a subject are of specialization while non-specialists are those that specialize on other Social Sciences subjects such as geography, history, government, among others. The study also revealed that there was a significant difference between the knowledge of Social Studies specialist teachers and non-specialist Social Studies teachers. The implication is that the Social Studies teacher specialists have robust knowledge of environmental education due to series of courses they have been exposed to during the course of their study in the various higher institutions and teaching the subject.

In order to buttress the above assertion, Sia (1992) opined that there is efficacy in teaching environmental education in pre-service training of teachers by either integrating environmental themes across discipline or through a separated course and this idea has not been embraced by non-specialist Social Studies teachers.

It was also noted that, we can only give what we have and not what we don't have. This simply means the full knowledge of environmental education by the Social Studies teachers will lead to effective dispositions of right attitude to the teaching of the subject or the concepts by the specialist Social Studies teachers to the students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that social studies specialist teachers exhibited positive attitude to the teaching of environmental education more than non-specialist social studies teachers. Also, it is submitted that the knowledge possessed by specialist social studies teachers is found to be different from that of non-specialist social studies teachers. Based on the above finding it was recommended that the school authorities should entrust the teaching of all social studies concepts such as environmental education into the hands of only Social Studies specialists. It was also recommended that there is need for the Federal and State ministries of education to employ the service of Social Studies experts to replace some of the auxiliary or non-specialist social studies teachers to handle the subject.

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