

EVALUATION OF SENIOR SECONDARY ONE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE STUDY OF LOCAL GEOGRAPHY IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study evaluated attitudes cultivated by senior secondary one students as a result of their exposure to the study of local geography. This was motivated by the consideration of the prime importance of local geography as a provider of impetus for the development geoscientific knowledge, skills and attitude which can be applied in further geographic studies at all levels of learning. The study was further motivated by concrete research finding in different fields of learning, affirming strong linear relationship between attitude and academic achievement, thus underscoring attitude as a significant construct not to be taken for granted in the business of educating. The survey research design was employed to conduct the study, using the stratified sampling method to select the sample of 5040 students who responded on the instrument of the study. Students' local geography attitude scale (SLGAS) was used to collect data for the study. SLGAS was validated by three experts in science education, test and measurement and psychology of education from the University of Jos. While its reliability was determined through the application of exploratory factor analysis which yielded .824 coefficient for the pilot study, the data collected for the study was analysed using frequency count and percentage for the research questions, and t-test of independent samples for the hypotheses. Results of the study showed that students cultivated positive attitude as a result of their exposure to the objectives, content, methods of teaching and time and season used by geography teachers to teach local geography. The study further revealed that though all students cultivated positive attitudes in relation to these variables, their attitudes varied on the basis of school type and gender. It was therefore recommended that geography teachers should continue to motivate students towards the study of local geography to bridge the gap between school types and gender groups. It was also recommended that further research be conducted on factors of gender and school type difference in students' attitude towards the study of local geography.

Keywords: Evaluation, SS 1 Students, Attitude, Local Geography, Plateau State.

Introduction

Attitude is an affective characteristic which always manifests subject-object relationship such that it is directed at something. Thus, one's attitude is a response to certain stimulus or experience which might be an object, persons, situation, events, norms or values and practices within a given environment. Hence, attitude (Mangal, 2013) has motivational affective characteristics in that individuals' attitude towards a thing is motivated by the integration and differentiation of their experience. This implies that attitude does not occur in void but is associated with something, an object or person, and it can either be positive, neutral or negative, depending on the individual's affective deposition towards the thing, person or object. More so, attitude strongly influences behaviour (Skinner, 2012; Kendra, 2013). Attitude

therefore has cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural components such that what someone thinks, feels and reacts to is an expression of attitude. The emotional component (Pierce, Stacey & Barkatsas, 2007) consists of the affective reaction to school and classroom activities including boredom, happiness and feeling of belonging, while the behaviour components consist of effort and determination. There is however no consensus among scholars on the predictive power of attitude on behaviour, as some researchers, for instance, Wiggins, Wiggins and Zanden (1994) in allusion to Lapiere provided striking discrepancy between attitude and behaviour. The authors therefore asserted that several situational factors serve to predict behaviour.

Studies in various fields including Geography show that different factors influence students' attitude towards a subject. Langat (2015) in reference to Fraster posits that learning environment at home, at school and peer groups account for significant amount of variance in students' attitude. In allusion to Mohammed and while Langat identified three factors influencing students' attitude: factors associated with students themselves such as anxiety, self-efficacy, self-concept, motivation and school experience; factors associated with the school such as teachers and teaching material, classroom management, teachers' knowledge, attitude, beliefs and motivation; and factors from home environment and society consisting of educational background, parental expectation and occupation. These are not exhaustive. For instance, from the school environment, the teacher factor such as method of subject matter delivery as well as the content of learning experiences from the curriculum and purpose or objective of learning, may strongly influence students' attitude towards learning. These shall be explored in the study in the context of the study of local Geography.

Local Geography is an aspect of the product of the national curriculum review of 2012 initiated by the Federal Government of Nigeria, aimed at attaining the then Millennium Development Goal (MDG) (NERDC, 2012). The aim of local Geography is to enable the senior secondary school students acquire sound knowledge of human and physical Geography of their local government, and to develop appropriate attitude and skills for collection, analysis and interpretation of primary Geographic data. This is believed to provide solid foundation for the study of Geography at a larger scale, as the students are expected to apply their knowledge of local Geography to this effect. This objective can only be attained if local Geography is properly taught and students developed the attitude congenial for its study. Thus, the lofty objectives of local Geography and Geography in general, notwithstanding shall remain unattended insofar as students' attitudes towards its study continue to be negative. This is because (Skinner, 2012) attitude plays a major role in any undertaking as it influences devotion, fairness, firmness, honesty, endurance and discipline. The interaction of the cognitive and affective domain of learning is affirmed by Okunrotifa (1977) to be very important that the teacher should set his curriculum goal to achieve both. Okunrotifa stresses that if teaching for cognitive goal is done to the exclusion of the affective goal, it may prevent the thinking process. This by implication, would lead to poor knowledge and low achievement in the subject.

A casual survey of the study of local Geography in the study area in 2019 of 26 senior secondary schools by the researcher revealed that very few students had acquired the knowledge of local Geography of the area. Students could rarely describe the physical and cultural geographical features, analyse the relationship between the physical and cultural

forms as well as between the town and the surrounding environment. This has strong implication for their achievement in Geography as a whole. The achievement of students in Geography's external examination attests to this. For instance, the Chief Examiner's Reports for West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) between 2016 and 2018 reveal that the achievement of students fell below expectation as many students performed either poorly or below average. This may not be unconnected with the attitude disposition of the students towards local Geography and Geography in general, since attitude has strong influence on all aspects of education (Ajayi, Lawani&Adeyanju, 2011). The connection between students' attitude and achievement is further strengthened by the assertion of Juxtaposition (2010) who states that attitude sharply affects students' achievement in a subject either positively or negatively, resulting from factors such as the nature of the course, strategies and material employed to teach the course and how the subject is generally presented. However, not only students' attitude affect their academic achievement, but other factors such as teachers' abilities, qualification, knowledge of subject content, communication ability, teaching method and classroom management are strong contributors (Alafiatayo, Anyanwu&Salau, 2016; Janssen & Brien, 2014). The implication of attitude and other factors to students' achievement in school subjects, Geography inclusive, and the value of local Geography to the study of Geography in general is the motivation for this study, particularly that local Geography is considered by curriculum planners as the foundation upon which Geography is built.

Purpose of the Study

The study's purpose was to evaluate Senior Secondary One students' attitude towards the study of local Geography, guided by four specific objectives. These included determining attitudes cultivated by students due to their exposure to:

1. the curriculum objectives of local Geography
2. the methods of employed by Geography teachers in the teaching of local Geography
3. the curriculum content of local Geography
4. the time and seasons Geography teachers used to teach local Geography.

Research Questions

Four research questions were answered to accomplish the objectives of the study. These include the following:

1. What attitude is cultivated by students as a result of their exposure to the objective of local Geography?
2. What attitude is cultivated by students as result of their exposure to the content of local Geography?
3. What attitude is cultivated by students as a result of their exposure to the methods employed by Geography teachers to teach local Geography?
4. What attitude is cultivated by students towards the time and season used by Geography teachers to teach local Geography?

Hypotheses

Six hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance during the study. These include the following:

1. There is no significant difference between public and private schools students on attitudes they cultivated due to exposure to the objectives of local Geography.

2. There is no significant difference between public and private school students on attitudes they cultivated due to exposure to the content of local Geography.
3. There is no significant difference between public and private school students on attitudes they cultivated due to exposure to the methods used by Geography teachers to teach local Geography.
4. There is no significant difference between boys and girls on attitudes they cultivate due to exposure to the objectives of local Geography.
5. There is no significant difference between boys and girls on attitudes they cultivated due to exposure to the content of local Geography.
6. There is no significant difference between boys and girls on attitudes they cultivated as a result of exposure to the methods used by Geography teachers to teach local Geography.

Method and Procedure

The survey research design was adapted in the study in which the stratified sampling method was used to select a sample of 5040 Senior Secondary One Geography students in Plateau State, representing 22% of the population of the study. The stratified sampling method was used to ensure that both public and private school students were included in the study as the researcher was interested in investigating differences between the two groups on the basis of the main variables of the study. Consequently, the senior secondary schools in the state were first divided into two strata (public and private), and serialized exclusively. Secondly, a table of random number was used to select 22% of the number of schools in each group. All the Senior Secondary One students in the randomly selected schools were used as the sample for the study. This process gave rise to a sample of 5040 students, consisting of 1800 in public and 3240 in private schools; and 2780 boys and 2260 girls. Students' Local Geography Attitude Scale (SLGAS) was the instrument used to collect data for the study. This was validated by three experts one each in Science Education, Test and Measurement and Psychology of Education, from the University of Jos. The three experts determined the content validity of SLGAS, while exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to determine its construct validity after a pilot study conducted in separate schools from the ones designated for the study. More so, Cronbach alpha method was used to measure the reliability of the instrument, which yielded a coefficient of .824. Frequency count and percentage was used to answer the four research questions, while t-test of independent samples was applied for testing the six hypotheses of the study.

Results

Research Question One: What attitude is cultivated by students as a result of their exposure to the objectives of local Geography?

Table 1: Summary of Analysis of Attitude Cultivated by Students due to Exposure to Objectives of Local Geography

Items	Positive		Neutral		Negative	
	N	%	n	%	n	%
1	3540	70.20	160	3.20	1340	26.60
2	3420	67.85	60	1.20	1560	30.95
3	3360	66.67	80	1.58	1600	31.74
4	3340	66.23	40	0.79	1660	32.93

Note: 49-80 = positive, 33-48 = Neutral, 16-32 = Negative

The data in Table 1 show that students respond positively on all four items of the instrument. None of the responses fell below 49%. This means that students cultivated positive attitude towards the objectives of local Geography.

Research Question Two: What attitude is cultivated by students as a result of their exposure to the content of local Geography?

Table 2: Summary of Analysis of Attitude Cultivated by Students due to Exposure to Content of Local Geography

Items	Positive		Neutral		Negative	
	N	%	n	%	n	%
5	3500	69.44	100	1.98	1440	28.57
6	3620	71.82	100	1.98	1320	26.19
7	3300	65.47	180	3.57	1560	30.95
8	3400	67.46	120	2.38	1520	30.16
9	3520	69.84	240	4.76	1280	25.40

Note: 49-80 = positive, 33-48 = Neutral, 16-32 = Negative

The data in Table 2 indicate that the least positive response of the students on the five items of the instrument was 65.47% while the highest negative response was 30.95. Since the least percentage positive response does not fall below 49 and the negative above 32, it means that students cultivated positive attitude due to their exposure to the context of local Geography.

Research Question Three: What attitude is cultivated by students as a result of their exposure to the methods employed by Geography teachers to teach local Geography?

Table 3: Summary of Analysis of Attitude Cultivated by Students due to Exposure to Methods of Teaching Local Geography

Items	Positive		Neutral		Negative	
	N	%	n	%	N	%
10	3440	68.25	260	5.16	1340	26.59
11	3440	68.25	180	3.57	1620	32.14

Note: 49-80 = positive, 33-48 = Neutral, 16-32 = Negative

From the data in Table 3, it is shown that the percentage positive response of the students on the two items were equally 68.25. This was much greater than 49% being the lowest point for positive response. The data also shows that the highest negative response was 32.14 percent which is slightly above 32 percent being the highest point on the negative response scale. This therefore means that students cultivated positive attitudes towards the methods employed by Geography teachers to teach local Geography.

Research Question Four: What attitude is cultivated by students towards the time and season used by Geography teachers to teach local Geography?

Table 4: Summary of Analysis of Attitude Cultivated by Students towards the Time and Season of Teaching Local Geography

Items	Positive		Neutral		Negative	
	N	%	n	%	N	%
12	3420	67.85	120	2.38	1500	29.76
13	3000	59.52	220	4.36	1820	36.11
14	3440	68.25	180	3.35	1420	28.17
15	3440	68.25	260	5.12	1340	26.59
16.	3340	66.27	80	1.59	1620	32.14

Note: 49-80 = positive, 33-48 = Neutral, 16-32 = Negative

The data in Table 4 shows that the lowest percentage positive response score was 59.52, while the highest percentage negative response score was 36.11. The positive percentage score is well above 49%, the lowest point on the positive response scale, while 36.11 negative percentage score is slightly above 32, the highest point on the negative response scale. This signifies that students cultivated positive attitude towards the time and season used by teachers to teach local Geography.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between public and private school students on attitudes cultivated due to their exposure to the objectives of local Geography.

Table 5: Summary of t-test Analysis of Difference between Public and Private School Students on Attitudes cultivated on Objectives of Local Geography

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	sd	df	T	P
Public	1800	20.00	0.00	5038	61.30	.000
Private	3240	12.11	5.46			

The t-test of independent sample was used to test the difference between students in public and private schools on attitudes cultivated as result of their exposure to the objectives of local Geography. The data on this variable was analysed using SPSS Statistical Package, and the output of the analysis shows that the t-value = 61.30 and the p-value = .000. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, it means that the difference between public and private school students on attitudes cultivated due to exposure to the objectives of local Geography was significant. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and concluded that the difference between the two groups of students on attitude cultivated due to their exposure to the objective of local Geography was significant.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between public and private school students on attitudes cultivated as a result of their exposure to the content of local Geography.

Table 6: Summary of t-test Analysis of Difference between Public and Private School Students on Attitude cultivated on Content Local Geography

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	sd	Df	T	P
Public	1800	34.87	0.34	5038	69.15	.000
Private	3240	20.06	9.08			

The t-test of independent same was used to test the difference between public and private schools students on attitudes cultivated as a result of their exposure to the content of local Geography. The data was analysed using SPSS Statistical Package, and the output of the analysis showed that the t-value = 69.15 and the p-value = .000. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, it means that the difference between public and private school students on attitudes cultivated due to exposure to content of local Geography was significant. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and thus concluded that the difference between the two groups on attitudes cultivated on the content of local Geography was significant.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference between public and private school students on attitudes cultivated as a result of their exposure to the methods used by Geography teachers to teach local Geography.

Table 7: Summary of t-test Analysis of Difference between Public and Private School Students on Attitude cultivated on the Methods of Teaching Local Geography

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	sd	Df	T	P
Public	1800	25.00	0.00	5038	66.67	.000
Private	3240	14.72	6.52			

The t-test of independent sample was used to test the difference between public and private school students on attitudes cultivated on method of teaching local Geography. The data was analysed using SPSS Statistical Package and the output of the analysis revealed that the t-value = 66.67 and the p-value = .000. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 the difference between public and private school students on attitudes cultivated on the methods of teaching local Geography was significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and concluded that the difference between the two groups on attitudes cultivated on the methods used by Geography teachers to teach local Geography was significant.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference between boys and girls on attitudes cultivated as a result of their exposure to the objectives of local Geography.

Table 8: Summary of t-test Analysis of Difference between Boys and Girls on Attitudes cultivated on the Objectives of Local Geography

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	df	T	P
Boys	2780	19.33	1.28	5038	103.31	.000
Girls	2260	9.77	4.62			

The t-test of independent sample was used to test the difference between boys and girls on attitudes cultivated due to exposure to the objectives of local Geography. The data was analysed using SPSS Statistical Package, and the output of the analysis revealed that the t-value = 103.31 and p-value = .000. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, it means that the difference between boys and girls on attitudes cultivated on the objectives of local Geography was significant. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and concluded that the difference

between boys and girls on attitudes cultivated on the objectives of local Geography was significant.

Hypothesis Five: There is no significant difference between boys and girls on attitudes cultivated as a result of their exposure to the content of local Geography.

Table 8: Summary of t-test Analysis of Difference between Boys and Girls on Attitudes cultivated on the Content of Local Geography

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	df	T	P
Boys	2780	33.14	2.79	5038	105.53	.000
Girls	2260	16.22	7.79			

The t-test of independent sample was used to test the difference between boys and girls on attitudes cultivated due to exposure to the content of local Geography. The data was analysed using SPSS Statistical Package, and the output of the analysis revealed that the t-value = 105.53 and p-value = .000. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, it means that the difference between boys and girls on attitudes cultivated on the content of local Geography was significant. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and concluded that the difference between boys and girls on attitudes cultivated on the content of local Geography was significant.

Hypothesis Six: There is no significant difference between boys and girls on attitudes they cultivated as result of their exposure to the methods employed by Geography teachers to teach local Geography.

Table 10: Summary of t-test Analysis of Difference between Boys and Girls on Attitudes they cultivated on Methods of Teaching Local Geography

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	sd	df	T	P
Boys	2780	23.66	2.04	5038	92.82	.000
Girls	2260	12.22	6.04			

The t-test of independent samples was used to test the difference between boys and girls on the attitudes they cultivated as a result of their exposure to methods employed by Geography teachers to teach local Geography. The data was analysed using SPSS Statistical Package, and output of the analysis revealed that the t-value = 92.82, and p-value = .000. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, it means that the difference between boys and girls on the attitudes cultivated on methods of teaching local Geography was significant. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected in favour of the alternative.

Discussion

Results of the study revealed that students cultivated positive attitudes towards the objectives, content, methods of teaching and time and season used by Geography teachers to teach local Geography. The positive attitude was developed by all students collectively irrespective of school type and gender difference. The outcome of the study is aplausible development because if Geography teachers would take advantage of students' positive attitude disposition, there would be effective study of local Geography and consequential

improvement in their achievement in external examination. This is not to be taken for granted as many scholars, Ajayi, Lawani and Adeyolu (2011) for instance, have informed that attitude has strong influence on all aspects of education, academic achievement inclusive. These authors corroborated several others, for instance, Skinner (2012) and Okunrotifa (1977), who espoused that attitude has strong influence on the cognitive capacity and educational output of learners. Okunrotifa particularly stressed that teaching should be directed at achieving both cognitive and affective goals. The study further revealed that though all students cultivated positive attitudes as a result of exposure to the study of local geography, their attitude disposition varied on the basis of school type in favour of public schools, and on the basis of gender in favour of males. Thus, students in public schools had higher attitude mean score than the mean score of those in private schools, while boys had higher attitude mean score than that of girls. Factors responsible for those variations were beyond the scope of this study, hence should serve as a fertile ground for new research.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Geography teachers should continue to motivate students towards the study of local Geography to bridge the gap between gender groups and school type.
2. This study should be replicated in other parts of Nigeria to see if similar results would emerge.
3. Further study should be conducted on factors of gender and school type difference in students' attitude towards the study of local Geography.

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