



## **Impact of Social Studies Curriculum on Empathy Dispositions of NCE I and NCEIII Students of Colleges of Education in North West Zone, Nigeria**

**Bulus Mgwaongs Dalyop**  
*FCT Area Command, Abuja, Nigeria*

### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the impact of social studies curriculum on the affective dispositions of students of Colleges of Education in North-West Zone of Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to determine the level of NCE I and NCE III students' affective dispositions in the area of empathy. One research question and one hypothesis was generated for the study. Survey and causal comparative designs were adopted for the study. A sample of 3970 NCE students were carefully selected through a proportionate stratified sampling technique. Questionnaire was developed and tagged Student-Teachers' Affective Disposition Rating Scale (SADRS) and used for the study. Data were collected and analyzed using simple percentage, and t-test statistic. Results indicated that, social studies curriculum has significant impact on affective disposition of NCE social studies students. NCE III social studies students exhibited greater level of moderate to high empathy as a result of exposure to social studies curriculum. Based on these findings, the researcher made some recommendations such as inclusion of respect for individual human rights into social studies curriculum.

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The social studies curriculum at the NCE level has some designed contents specifications which include affective domain of empathy. The word empathy connotes the ability to share another person's feelings and emotions as if they were one's own. The social studies curriculum is expected to impact positively on the part of student-teachers in order for them to demonstrate the desired attitude and values.

Empathy is the ability to connect one's emotions to that of another in which social studies curriculum provides (Plomin, 1990 and Goleman, 1995).

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Empathy is also the ability to understand and communicate “as if” from the other person’s point of view, taking the other person’s perspective, while at the same time not losing sight of the fact that the feelings and thoughts belong to the other person. It is the ability to imagine oneself in another’s place and understand the other’s feelings, desires, ideas, and action. Empathy is thus a complex process that involves both cognitive and affective abilities such as listening to key ideas and discerning core emotions in emotional stories; being able to recognise the facial display of emotion; identifying emotion in verbal statements, tone of voice and body language; carefully selecting appropriate emotion words when preparing a response emitting appropriate emotional responses, internally “reasoning” with compatible feeling; offering sensitive reflection statements; and generalising emotional content to new or comparable situations (Martin, 1991; Goldstein and Michaels, 1985).

Hoffman (2000) sees empathy as foundational to moral development. Affective disposition of empathy is the tendency of an individual to exhibit emotional and or behavioral tendencies to someone or something based on his/her knowledge of that thing. For instance, an individual may be exposed to a particular experience that recorded in his mind the feeling and thought thereby creating some change in attitude or behaviour. This may however be positive or negative depending on the individuals’ perception and exposure to such phenomena. The ability to imagine oneself as another person is a sophisticated imaginative process. However, the basic capacity to recognize emotion is probably innate and may be achieved unconsciously. Yet, it can be trained and achieved with various degree of intensity or accuracy among students (Eisenberg, 1990).

Thus, the social studies curriculum contents aimed at addressing the societal and cultural expectation of the students in a particular institution. Based on this broad based curriculum, the empathy is seen as the capacity to recognize and to some extent, share feelings such as sadness or happiness that are being experienced by another sentient or semi-sentient being. Someone may need to have certain amount of empathy before they are able to feel compassion. Empathy is regarded as the key cornerstone in genuine human relationship. Empathy is consciousness and it means one with empathy feels compassion, while those without do not take into account other people’s emotions (Batson, 1987; Wikipedia 2011).

In addition, Batson (1987) asserts that empathy is a motivation oriented attributes towards the other person. The capacity to know emotionally what another is experiencing from within the reference of that other person, the capacity to sample the feelings of another or to put “one’s self in another’s shoes” through systematic classroom instruction. Periodically, the content of the social studies curriculum and its impact on the students need to be evaluated in order to ascertain whether or not it is influencing the attitude and attribute of student-teachers. It is in that perspective that this study aimed at finding the impact of social studies curriculum on empathy disposition of students and compare whether or not there is a significant difference in the

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empathy disposition of the students as a result of their exposure to social studies curriculum.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem of this study stemmed from the observation of variations in attitude disposition of students towards their teachers as well as fellow students. There appears to be a feeling of “self” rather than to other in the way students relate to their teachers and fellow students. Though Levenson and Ruef (1992) state that any knowledge gained of the emotions of the other must be revisable in light of further information arising from teaching and learning or experiences with the school curriculum. The researcher is of the belief that the affective domain which involves empathy has not been effectively delivered to students as contained in the social studies curriculum. This has in turn hampered effective empathy disposition of students resulting in social vices like poor interpersonal relationship and lack care for one another.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

This study examines the impact of social studies curriculum on empathy disposition of NCE I and NCE III students in colleges of education in North West Nigeria. Specifically, the purpose was to determine the level of NCE I and NCE III students’ affective dispositions in the area of empathy.

#### **Research Question**

What is the level of social studies NCE I and NCE III students’ affective dispositions in the area of empathy?

#### **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.  
There is no significant difference in empathy mean scores of NCE I and NCE III students exposed to social studies curriculum.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopts the causal comparative design aimed at determining the impact of social studies curriculum on empathy disposition of students of Colleges in Education in North-West Zone of Nigeria. This design was used to establish relationship between social studies curriculum and students empathy disposition. Causal comparative studies attempt to establish cause-

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effect relationship among variables (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996; Martella, Gay, 1996; 1999; 1999; Nelson, & Martella, 1999). There was also no manipulation of independent variable such as the empathy ( Awotunde, & Ugodulunwa, 2004). The researcher was able to compare the responses of students on how social studies curriculum affected their affective dispositions in the areas of empathy.

#### **Population and Sample**

The population of this study include social studies students drawn from six Conventional Colleges of Education in the North-West zone of Nigeria. The sample for the study was selected based on simple random sampling technique and is made up of 2,127 NCE I, and 1,843 NCE III social studies students in the six conventional Colleges of Education in the North West Zone. The total sample of NCE I and NCE III students was 3,970 students.

The choice of NCE I and NCE III was to compare the empathy disposition of the NCE I and NCE III students.

#### **Instrumentation**

One instrument was used for the purpose of data collection in this study. The Student-Teachers' Empathy Dispositions Rating Scale (SEDRS) The instrument contains 10 items. The rating scale was designed to determine the extent to which student-teachers have developed empathy dispositions in terms of acquiring the affective components intrinsic in student's development as a result of their classroom exposure to social studies curriculum.

Part A of the instrument provided background information on name of institution, and class level. The part B of the instrument was the Students' Affective Dispositions Rating Scale (SEDRS) This provided students with opportunity to verify the current thinking in the area of empathy components of social studies curriculum. The instrument was administered, collected and analysed following the research questions and hypothesis. The results are presented below:

## **RESULTS**

### **Research Question One**

What is the level of social studies NCE I and NCE III students affective dispositions in the area of empathy?

**Table 1:** Percentage Distribution of Level of Empathy Dispositions of Social Studies NCE I and NCE III Students.

Level of Compassion		Level of Study				Total	
Level	Range of scores	NCE I		NCE III		N	%
		N	%	N	%		
Low	10-29	877	41.4	694	37.7	1571	39.6
Moderate	30-39	1122	52.8	1046	56.8	2168	54.6
High	40-50	128	6.0	103	5.6	231	5.8
Total		2127	100	1843	100	3970	100

Table 1: shows percentage responses of NCE students according to their level of empathy dispositions. Eight hundred and seventy-seven (41.4%) of NCE I students have low empathy dispositions in social studies and six hundred and ninety-four (37.7%) of NCE III students have low dispositions. One thousand, one hundred and twenty-two representing 52.8% of NCE I students have moderate dispositions to social studies curriculum while one thousand and forty six representing 56.8% of NCE III students have moderate dispositions. One hundred and twenty eight representing 6.0% of the NCE I students have high dispositions to social studies curriculum while one hundred and three presenting (5.6%) of NCE III students have high dispositions. The general finding from the result shows that majority 56.8% of NCE I students have moderate to high empathy dispositions while majority but higher percentage (62.4%) of NCE III students also have moderate to high level of empathy dispositions. It can be deduced that there was no difference in empathy dispositions of NCE I and NCE III students.

From the results of data analysed the following can be summarized about the study:

1. In general, social studies curriculum has significance impact on affective disposition of NCE social studies students.
2. Both NCE I and III social studies students in the North West Zone of Nigeria, exhibits moderate to high level of empathy as a result of exposure to social studies curriculum.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Level of NCE Students Affective Dispositions in the Area of Empathy**

The research question sought to find out the level of social study NCE I and III students affective disposition in the area of Empathy. The result indicates

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that NCE III students showed higher level of moderate to high levels of empathy. This implies that social studies curriculum has significant impact on affective disposition of students in the Colleges of Education in North-West Zone of Nigeria.

The hypothesis which sought to establish the difference in the empathy disposition mean scores of NCE I and III students. The hypothesis was tested using t-statistic and a p-value was obtained. The hypothesis was rejected. This showed that NCE III students have higher empathy disposition mean score than the NCE I students. This result agrees with the finding recorded in research question one. Hence, it can be deduced that empathy which is an aspect of affective domain can be understood and utilized when an individual has an experience or has been deliberately taught to feel for something or somebody. The NCE III students have been exposed to the social studies curriculum and that may have pre-disposed them to have more empathy than their cohorts in NCE I.

This finding is in agreement with the view of Batron (1987) who says that empathy is a motivation oriented attribute towards the other person. The capacity to know emotionally what another is experiencing from within the frame of reference of that person, the capacity to sample the feelings of another or to put "one's self in another's shoes". Similarly, Eisenberg (1990) explains that empathy is an effective response that stems from the apprehension or comprehension of another's emotional state or condition, and that is similar to what the other person is feeling or would be expected to feel.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made: Social studies curriculum was found to have significant impact on affective disposition of students at colleges of education in Northwest zone of Nigeria, but the extent to which these dispositions are exhibited vary from one level of NCE students to the other. In the empathy disposition both NCE I and NCE III students demonstrated between moderate to high empathy dispositions with NCE III level of moderate to high empathy dispositions was higher. To this end, curriculum planners should improve on the present social studies curriculum and insist that NCE teachers deliberately teach students towards positive empathy dispositions including cultural values, such as, feeling for the plight of someone in difficulties and value for human life. These could be made topical issue in the social studies curriculum to encourage NCE students towards higher positive empathy disposition on others. The major purpose of educational research is to make contribution to knowledge and fields of study. The findings of this study have made the following useful contributions to knowledge. These are:

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This investigation has discovered that the social studies curriculum has significant impact on affective disposition of NCE students in the areas of empathy. The findings have important implication for attitude change in the students if the social studies curriculum is enhanced to deliberately teach these variables for even higher affective dispositions.

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