

A Study of Factors Influencing Students' Enrolment in Social Studies Education at the Post-Secondary School Level in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to find out the factors influencing students' enrollment in social studies education at the post secondary level of education in Nigeria. The population included all students enrolled in social studies programme in tertiary institutions of learning in Edo State, Nigeria while the sample of the study consisted of one hundred and seventy-five (175) social studies students. The questionnaire was used to collect data while the chi-square test was used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that job prospects or employment opportunities, gender and environmental factors have significant influence on students' enrollment in social studies programme whereas socio-economic, teacher-related, and parental factors do not influence students' enrollment in social studies. Therefore, the paper recommended that teachers, parents and other stakeholders should change their dispositions and attitude towards the subject. Similarly, social studies practitioners, professors, associations like Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN), government, social studies teachers and other professionals should do more to sensitize and enlighten the public on the benefits accruable from the course.

Keywords: Social studies, socio-economic, parent, employment opportunities, gender, environment factors

INTRODUCTION

Social studies education is geared at helping students acquire a store of tested social theory and body of principles which are relevant to contemporary social issues. It came into being at the beginning of the 20th century and it has gained increased relevance in many countries including Nigeria. As a new field of study, it has attracted many scholars and professionals who have made several attempts to provide explanations for the meaning of the subject (Iyamu, 1991). The objectives of teaching social studies in Nigerian schools as summarized by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) include: humanistic, citizenship, intellectual and value education. Despite these laudable objectives for the introduction of social sciences in Nigerian schools, many students and their parents tend to see social studies as an academic discipline which is unpopular and unattractive among other disciplines in Nigeria. Besides, the factors which are believed to influence students' enrollment in the course have not been extensively studied. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the factors influencing students' enrollment in social studies education at the post-secondary level of education in Nigeria.

The rest of the paper is structured into five sections. The immediate section is the review of literature. The third section dwells on the research methodology. The fourth section is the data analysis and test of hypotheses. The fifth section is the conclusion while the recommendations is the last section.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Post-secondary refers to the education or learning which is acquired in post-secondary institutions. Post-secondary institution of learning refers to the provision of a formal instructional programme whose curriculum is designed primarily for students beyond the compulsory age for high school (Inman, 2008). According to Inman (2008), the matrix of higher education benefits includes public and private effects relating to social and economic considerations. Individuals participating in higher education tend to increase public tax revenues while decreasing reliance on government financial support. There is also greater productivity. The social benefits include: reduced crime rates, increased charitable giving, higher rates of community service, improved health and life expectancy; other benefits are: higher employment rates, higher earnings, better access to further training, better health and less involvement in criminal activities.

The factors affecting students' enrolment include socio-economic parent, teacher, gender, environmental and employment opportunities. Demi, Coleman-Jensen & Synder (2010) identify the interacting influences among tuition, financial aid policies and students' socio-economic status. Students who are more economically advantaged possess "tuition elasticity close to unity" meaning that, "a one percent increase in tuition will lead to about a one-percent decrease in enrollment yield. Socio-economic background of students have positive effects on students' choice of career as students tend to take into cognizance the cost of education before embarking on a particular programme of study. Higher levels of parental income are strongly associated with young adult post-secondary school attainment, and higher levels of parental education are also related to youth college attendance (Demi, et al 2010).

Ming (2010) finds students are often attracted to post-secondary education because of the career opportunities it may provide. Ming (2010) states that, 'students often make choices based on existing job opportunities for college graduates'. Students are interested in outcomes. They are influenced by what graduates are doing, what graduate schools they attend and contributes that they are making to society. Lifestyle may be an important factor in career decision making because students preferred greater financial rewards and higher social status upon graduation. Kochung et al (2011) states that there are often certain benefits that people expect to come with the chosen career as they make career choices. These benefits are referred to as outcome expectations. The outcome expectations include: availability of jobs, employment security, prestige associated with the profession, availability of advancement, ability to choose career specialization, self employment opportunity and opportunity to apply skills and knowledge. Some students chose the careers that give high income. Discrimination in certain profession also prevents students from choosing certain careers (Kochung et al, 2011).

In a study by Jekayinfa (1996) it was found that sex- being male or female, is a factor which influences students' attitudes towards social studies teachers and career study. She reported that attitude towards social studies teachers and career interested in social studies are sex-linked. Girls tend to be more inclined to social studies and related subjects while boys tend to be more inclined to the science subjects. Social studies as a course is perceived by many people as a very simple, easy and feminine course. However, Kochung et al (2011) find that gender plays a very minimal role in students' career choice.

Jekayinfa (n.d.) sees location of the school as an environmental factor which can influence students' enrollment in social studies. According to her investigations, students' enjoyment of social studies and social studies lessons, social implication of social studies, attitudes towards

social studies teachers, career interest and leisure interest in social studies are dependent on the location of the school. Students located in urban areas show more positive interest in social studies because of their exposure to the media and information about social studies unlike their counterparts in the rural areas who have little or no exposure to the subject matter as well as the beneficial nature of social studies and the career opportunities opened to them. Marwan (2011) also finds that the city where a school is located influences students' choice. Kochung et al (2011) are of the opinion that environment plays a very minimal role when it comes to students' career choice. According to Choy & Carroll (1998), location-related reasons can include: proximity or distance, some students may choose to remain close to home so as to maintain close ties with their families and friends or to be assured that they could get home quickly and inexpensively for vacations or in case of emergency.

Other issues discussed under environmental factors are intelligence and inheritance. Often times, social studies is perceived as a relatively simple course. That is, it is quite easy to pass, and as such should be left for students with low intelligence quotient (I.Q) to enroll into. There are times when social studies students have had to face students in other programme /courses who would always ask them: why are you studying social studies? Why not go for medicine, law and such like?. These questions are often asked because it is the belief that a course like social studies education should be for the less intelligent students.

Aspects of the family context are important determinants of post-secondary school enrollment. Two key factors are parents' socio-economic status and youth bonds or relationships to their parents. The indirect relationship between parents with high levels of education and youth college attendance occurs through the transmission of values towards post-secondary education that translates to encouragement and expectations for their youth to attend college. Parents with goals and expectations that support post-secondary education are more likely to have children when enroll in post-secondary institutions (Demi et al, 2010). Moreover, parents with higher level of income tend to be more actively involved in their children's schooling, which is also associated with later post-secondary school enrollment. Thus we expect that parents with higher education and higher incomes are more likely to have their youth enrolled in post-secondary school (Demi et al,2010).

The relationship between the parent and child may mediate the relationship between parents' income and adolescent schooling. Also, the parent/adolescent relationship may have a direct effect on adolescent college enrollment. Positive bonds or attachment to parents in adolescence include maintaining affective and close ties with parents, recognizing the importance of parents, and looking to parents as role models. Warm and supportive parent-adolescent bonds provide young adults with support needed when making important life decisions about educational and occupational goals. (Demi et al, 2010). Under advantageous circumstances, parents may have bigger influence on their children's career decisions (Goldstein (2007). Rural students tend to seek help from parents more than urban students and parents more than teachers play a major role in the career choice of students (Kochung et al, 2011). Most people are influenced by careers that their parents favour. Young people aspirations are influenced by their parents aspirations and expectations. Parental support and encouragement are important factors that have been found to influence career choice. Children may choose what their parents desire simply to please them (Kochung ,et al 2011).

According to Khaled & Chiodo (2004), the teacher-learning environment played a key role in shaping students' attitude about social studies. Teachers who were willing to assist students in learning showed enthusiasm in the classroom, and paid close attention to students' need had a strong effect on how students felt about social studies. Attitude contributes largely to teacher success because: first, how a student judged a teacher was linked to the student's

potential for developing an open-minded attitude about the subject; second, students who had a positive attitude towards the subject matter were more likely to continue being focused on that particular subject, third, students' feelings regarding school helped to positively shape relationships with parents, teachers and peers.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the review of literature, the research hypotheses are:

1. There is no significant relationship between socio-economic factors and students' enrollment in social studies education.
2. There is no significant relationship between employment opportunities and students' enrollment in social studies education.
3. There is no significant relationship between the sex of students and students' enrollment in social studies education.
4. There is no significant relationship between environmental factors and students' enrollment in social studies education.
5. There is no significant difference between parents influence on the choice of career for their children and students' enrollment in social studies.
6. There is no significant relationship between teacher's attitude and disposition towards social studies and students enrollment in social studies education

METHODOLOGY

The survey design was adopted for the study. The target population included students students in teacher training colleges, colleges of education and university undergraduate students enrolled in social studies programmes in Edo State, Nigeria. Using the stratified random sampling, a sample size of two hundred and fifty (250) students offering Social Studies at the University of Benin and College of Education, Ekiadolor-Benin was used for the study. The questionnaire items followed the modified four-point likert scale of: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The questionnaire consisted of two sections A and B. Section A determine demographic data of the respondents while Section B consisted of items on factors being investigated. The questionnaire was cross-checked by a professor and research experts to ensure the validity of the instrument before administration. The response rate was 70%. Data analysis was carried using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 20.0. and the hypotheses were tested using the chi-square statistical test.

Table 1. Determination of the Sample size

| <i>Institutions / Levels</i> | <i>Number of Students in Level</i> | <i>Sample</i> | <i>Number of Students in Level</i> | <i>Sample</i> |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| <i>University of Benin</i> | | | | |
| <i>Full-Time</i> | | <i>Part-time</i> | | |
| 200 Level | 28 | 28 | Year 3 | 20 |
| 300 Level | 25 | 25 | Year 4 | 49 |
| 400 Level | 20 | 20 | Year 5 | 21 |

| <i>Institutions / Levels</i> | <i>Number of Students in Level</i> | <i>Sample</i> |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| <i>College of Education</i> | | |
| Year 1 | 250 | 30 |
| Year 2 | 250 | 30 |
| Year 3 | 280 | 40 |
| TOTAL | 943 | 250 |

Source: Field survey (2012)

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

| | | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>(%)</i> | | | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>(%)</i> |
|----|---------------------------------|------------------|--------------|----|--------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1. | SEX: | | | 6. | LEVELS: | | |
| | Male | 53 | 30.3 | | <i>a. Full-time</i> | | |
| | Female | 122 | 69.7 | | 200 | 23 | 13.1 |
| | <i>Total</i> | <i>175</i> | <i>100</i> | | 300 | 11 | 6.286 |
| | | | | | 400 | 14 | 8 |
| | | | | | | <i>175</i> | <i>100</i> |
| 2. | AGE (YEARS): | | | | <i>b. Part-time</i> | | |
| | 15-20 | 38 | 22.0 | | 300 | 32 | 18.28 |
| | 21-25 | 74 | 42.0 | | 400 | 11 | 6 |
| | 26-30 | 22 | 13.0 | | 500 | 17 | 6.29 |
| | 30 and above | 41 | 23.0 | | | <i>175</i> | <i>9.71</i> |
| | <i>Total</i> | <i>175</i> | <i>100</i> | | | | <i>100</i> |
| 3. | MARITAL STATUS: | | | | <i>c. College of Education</i> | | |
| | Single | 125 | 71.43 | | 100 | 31 | 17.71 |
| | Married | 49 | 28.0 | | 200 | 29 | 16.57 |
| | Widow | 1 | 0.57 | | 300 | 7 | 4 |
| | <i>Total</i> | <i>175</i> | <i>100</i> | | | <i>175</i> | <i>100</i> |
| 4. | RELIGION: | | | 7. | CERTIFICAT | | |
| | Christianity | 162 | 92.6 | | E IN VIEW: | | |
| | Islam | 10 | 5.7 | | NCE | 67 | 38 |
| | Others | 3 | 1.7 | | B.Ed | 108 | 62 |
| | <i>Total</i> | <i>175</i> | <i>100</i> | | <i>Total</i> | <i>175</i> | <i>100</i> |
| 5. | EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION: | | | 8. | PROGRAMM | | |
| | University | 108 | 61.7 | | E: | | |
| | College of Education | 67 | 38.30 | | Full Time | 113 | 65 |
| | <i>Total</i> | <i>175</i> | <i>100.0</i> | | Part time | 62 | 35 |
| | | | | | <i>Total</i> | <i>175</i> | <i>100</i> |

Source: Field survey (2012)

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 3. Responses from the questionnaire

[* Percentages in parentheses]

| | | Agree | Disagree | Total | Decision |
|----------|---|-----------------|---------------|----------------|----------|
| <i>A</i> | <i>Socio-economic factors</i> | | | | |
| 1. | Social studies is a less expensive course | 114 (65.1%)* | 60 (34.3%) | 174 (99.4) | Agree |
| 2. | There is a popular demand for social studies. | 118 (67.4) | 53 (30.3) | 171 (97.7) | Agree |
| 3. | There is a high prestige associated with qualifications in social studies | 130 (74.2) | 43 (24.6) | 173 (98.8) | Agree |
| <i>B</i> | <i>Employment opportunities factor</i> | | | | |
| 1. | Availability of job opportunities influence students enrollment in social studies | 109 (62.3) | 59 (33.7) | 168 (6) | Agree |
| 2. | Self-employment opportunities abound for graduates of social studies | 115 (65.71) | 56 (32) | 171 (97.71) | Agree |
| 3. | There is no link between social studies and student's future occupation | 55 (31.43) | 115 (65.7) | 170 (97) | Disagree |
| <i>C</i> | <i>Sex related factor</i> | | | | |
| 1. | Gender (sex) is an influential factor in choosing social studies as a course? | 55 (35) | 114 (65) | 169 (97) | Disagree |
| 2. | There are more female students in social studies programme than are male students | 112 (64) | 62 (35.4) | 174 (99.4) | Agree |
| 3. | Social studies is a feminine course | 70 (40) | 103 (58.9) | 173 (8.9) | Disagree |
| <i>D</i> | <i>Environmental factor</i> | | | | |
| 1. | Social studies is the most common course in my school | 70 (40) | 105 (60) | 175 (100) | Disagree |
| 2. | It is very easy to study and pass social studies | 92 (52.6) | 80 (45.7) | 172 (98.3) | Agree |
| 3. | Intelligence quotient (I.Q) and inheritance are factors that influence students' choice of social studies | 66 (37.7) | 106 (60.6) | 172 (8.3) | Disagree |
| 4. | The location of a school influences students choice of a course to enroll | 76 (43.42) | 93 (53.14) | 169 (96.6) | Disagree |
| 6. | The ease of securing admission into social studies programme influences students choice of the course | 69 (36.43) | 102 (58.3) | 171 (97.73) | Disagree |
| <i>E</i> | <i>Parent factor</i> | | | | |
| 1. | My parents encouraged my choice of social studies | 52 (29.71) | 119 (68) | 171 (97.71) | Disagree |
| 2. | My parents do not see social studies as a promising course. | 48 (25.4) | 121 (69.1) | 169 (6.5) | Disagree |
| <i>F</i> | <i>Teachers factor</i> | | | | |
| 1. | The attitude and disposition of my social studies teacher at the secondary school encouraged me in enrolling for social studies. | 98 (56) | 76 (43.5) | 174 (99.5) | Agree |
| 2. | I like social studies. Most social studies teachers are not professionally qualified. I enrolled in social studies programme so as to be professionally qualified to teach the subject. | 102 (58.3) | 73 (41.7) | 175 (100) | Agree |

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

The test of hypothesis in table 4 shows students' socio-economic background does not influence social studies choice. But there is a significant relationship between employment opportunity and students enrollment in social studies. This is consistent with Ming (2010) and Kochung & Migunde (2011). Again the significant relationship between gender and students choice of social studies as a course in hypothesis three reveals that social studies is gender sensitive. This agrees with Jekayinfa (1996) but inconsistent with Kochung & Migunde (2011) who found that gender plays a very minimal role when it comes to career choice of students. Moreover, hypothesis four shows a significant relationship between environmental factors and students' enrollment in social studies in hypothesis. This agrees with Marwan (2011), Choy & Carroll (1998) and Jekayinfa (1996) that environment such as location of a school influences students' enrollment in social studies programme.

From the analysis of hypothesis five, there is no significant relationship between parental factor and students' career choice. This result does not agree with Demi et al (2010) and Kochung & Migunde (2011) who found that parents have great influence in the career choice of their children. Hypothesis six shows there is no significant relationship between teachers' attitude and disposition towards teaching social studies and students' enrollment in social studies.

Table 4. Result of the test of Hypotheses

| | <i>Hypotheses</i> | <i>Calculated χ^2</i> | <i>Table χ^2</i> | <i>Remark on Ho</i> |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | There is no significant relationship between socio-economic factors and students' enrollment in social studies education. | 3.924 | 5.99 | Accept |
| 2 | There is no significant relationship between employment opportunities and students enrollment in social studies. | 52.18 | 5.99 | Reject |
| 3 | There is no significant relationship between the sex of students and students' enrollment in social studies. | 38.09 | 5.99 | Reject |
| 4 | There is no significant relationship between environmental factors and students' enrollment in social studies education. | 10.52 | 9.49 | Reject |
| 5 | There is no significant relationship between parents influence on the choice of career for their children and students' enrollment in social studies programme. | 0.16 | 3.81 | Accept |
| 6 | There is no significant relationship between teacher's attitude and disposition towards the teaching of social studies and students enrollment in social studies programme | 0.14 | 3.81 | Accept |

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to examine the factors influencing students' enrollment in social studies at the post-secondary school level of education. The findings revealed that socio-economic, teacher-related and parental factors do not influence students' enrollment in social studies whereas employment opportunities, gender and environment factors influence students enrollment in social studies programmes. Therefore it can concluded that employment opportunity, gender (that is, being male or female) and environmental factors

such as location of a school, intelligence quotient (I.Q) and inheritance have influence on students' enrollment in social studies at post secondary level of education influence students' enrollment in social studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are put forward to increase students' choice of social studies:

1. Teachers and parents should change their dispositions and attitude towards the subject. They should learn to be positive about the subject and they need to encourage their students and children to think about careers in social studies at an early age. Because the earlier children start thinking about the careers they would enjoy, the better off they would be when the actual time comes to start the career.
2. Many parents are yet to see or understand the socio-economic relevance of the course, as such social studies practitioners, teachers, government, Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) and other professionals need to do more in sensitizing the public by way of creating awareness in the benefits accruable from the course. By this, many parents would come to understand the socio-economic relevance of the course.
3. Universities and Colleges of Education should see it as point of duty to always organize seminars, workshops and symposia and as well promote all training programmes in social studies, as this would help in ensuring the relevance of the subject.
4. There is need for faculty and course advisers to inform social studies students of the earning potentials in the course.
5. Employment opportunities in social studies will be enhanced if government will employ social studies graduates to teach the subject at all levels of education instead of allowing other subject teachers to teach social studies.
6. Social studies curriculum planners should review the curriculum so as to make room for social studies to be taught from primary school all through senior secondary school. There should not be a break at the junior secondary school. This will help to promote students interest in enrolling for the subject at the post-secondary level and this will promote continuity. Also, more courses that tend to address rising issues in society should be introduced into the curriculum so as to give it credence.
7. Professionals in social studies should publicize the course so as to confer prestige on students and teachers of social studies.
8. Students have a wrong perception that social studies is meant for a particular sex, this orientation has to be corrected and social studies should be embraced by both sexes.
9. The erroneous conception that social studies should be studied by students of low intelligence quotient should be discouraged by practitioners of social studies as this will help to boost the prestige of holders of social studies certificate.

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