

## **Activity-Based Learning Strategies and Academic Achievement of Social Studies Students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area**

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigated activity-based learning strategies and academic performance of secondary schools students in Social Studies in Obio/Akpor LGA. The design of study is quasi-experimental. The population of the study consisted of 8579 JSSII Social Studies students, comprising 3744 male students and 4835 female all in Obio/Akpor LGA. The sample size comprised of 150 of male and female Social Studies students drawn from the selected schools. Four research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT) was used for data collection. Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and standard deviation were used for the research questions and z-test, t-test and Analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the hypotheses. Collaborative learning approach was found to be more effective in retention than cooperative and problem solving approaches. Additionally, the study revealed that co-operative learning approach was found to have significantly enhanced students' achievement test scores. It was concluded that collaborative and cooperative teaching strategies enhance students' academic achievement. The study recommends that teachers should encourage learning that engages students on hands-and-activity based such as collaborative, cooperative and problem-base learning straggles.*

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**Keywords:** *Activity-based learning strategy, Academic achievement, Social Studies*

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### **Introduction**

Education is the bed-rock of development of any nation. In recognition of this, Nigeria as a nation has used education to address some issues and problems. The nation Nigeria has also used the curriculum as an instrument for social transformation to address national issues and moral decadence in the society. One of the goals of education in Nigeria as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) posited that education should develop individual into a morally sound, patriotic and effective citizen. This can be achievable through educational activities that are learners centred for maximum development and self-fulfillment.

Gbamanja (1997) asserted that success or failure of any educational system depends on the successful planning and execution of the curriculum. Anwukah, (2000) concurred with the view that the survival of any nation or society depends upon how that society addresses contemporary issues such as crime, poverty, unemployment, terrorism, conflict, religious strife, drug abuse and ethnic among others. This stresses the importance of developing a relevant curriculum that will enable individual to cope with and function effectively in the global world.

Social Studies was introduced into the school curriculum to inculcate national consciousness, unity in diversity; national tolerance and respect for others. Okoro (2005) emphasized the position of Social Studies in the school curriculum, as a way by which national consciousness, unity in diversity, national tolerance and respect for others are taught or implemented over decades. It is unclear whether these lofty objectives of Social Studies that help in entrenching societal peace are being inculcated in the younger ones.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching-learning process is very much dependent on the teaching strategies, methods and skill. Dike (2002) in a study revealed that most teachers adopt expository method in teaching Social Studies concepts. Onwukwe (2010) and Abimbade (1997) confirmed that lecture method (expository) is predominantly used by teachers in teaching. This approach is often referred to as “talk and chalk method”, which is also known as teacher centered method. Mezieobi (2005) critically examined three major methods of teaching Social Studies. They are expository, problem solving and activity methods. All these methods have associated techniques that distinguish one from the other.

The expository method recognizes two participants – the speaker (teachers) and the audience. It is an old method of teaching in which organized thoughts, facts, information and knowledge are presented to the learners by the teacher. The problem solving method involves the teacher giving students problems with a view to finding solutions to the problems. It makes students think by means of solving problems and creating purposeful environments associated with discussion, simulation, field-trips, and dramatization among other strategies.

Iwuamadi (2013) emphasized on using appropriate method of teaching in order to foster learning. Activity learning according to Mezieobi (2005) is the major method of teaching Social Studies. The major teaching strategies associated with activity methods are discussion, simulation, collaborative, field trips, project, debate, demonstration, dramatization, questioning and role-playing. These methods entail active and lively involvement and participation of Social Studies learners. Activity learning strategy appears to be getting greater acceptance as a method of teaching Social Studies. This might be as a result of reported advantages it offers such as providing the learners with an in-depth knowledge of subject matter content; it develops learners’ interest and leads to discovery of new facts. Some of the activity-based strategies include; collaborative, cooperative, and problem-solving strategies.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Social Studies as an integrated and multi-disciplinary subject was introduced into Nigerian school curriculum to help train and develop intelligent, responsible, self-directed and democratically minded citizens. Today, the current status-quo of high crime wave and other societal ills shows that all is not well with the teaching and learning of Social Studies in our school systems. What then could be the problem? Could it be that the methods used in its teaching and learning are not effective in inculcating the appropriate knowledge, attitude and skills to the learners, or could it be that teachers of Social Studies are still using the conventional methods, like lecture and other teacher centred-strategies in the teaching of Social Studies or could it be that teachers are not familiar with or trained to use some of the identified activity based strategies as stated in the background to the study? The problem of this study therefore, is to examine the effect of activity based learning strategies on students’ academic achievement in Social Studies in junior secondary schools in Obio/Akpor LGA.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to determine the effect of activity-based learning and academic achievement of Social Studies students in Obio/Akpor LGA.

Specifically, the objectives are to:

- 1) Compare the mean score of Social Studies students’ taught with collaborative learning and problem based strategies.
- 2) Ascertain the effects of cooperative learning and problem based learning strategies on academic achievement of Social Studies students.
- 3) Investigate the difference between the mean score of Social Studies students’ taught with collaborative learning and cooperative learning strategies.

- 4) Establish the mean difference among students taught Social Studies using problem-based, cooperative and collaborative learning strategies.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- 1) What is the mean score of Social Studies students taught with collaborative learning and problem based strategies?
- 2) What is the effect of cooperative learning and problem based learning strategies on academic achievement of Social Studies students?
- 3) What is the difference in the mean scores of Social Studies students taught with collaborative learning and cooperative learning strategies?
- 4) What is the mean difference among students taught Social Studies using problem-based, cooperative and collaborative learning strategies.

### Methodology

The study used quasi-experimental design. The population covered 8,579 junior secondary school two students studying Social Studies in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. A sample of 180 junior secondary two (JSSII) Social Studies students in the three schools was purposively sampled. Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts in Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology Department, University of Port Harcourt. A reliability index of 0.79 was established for the study using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions whereas z-test was used to test hypotheses 1-3, while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) used to test hypotheses 4 at 0.05 significant level.

### Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the mean score of Score of Social Studies students taught with collaborative learning and problem based strategies?

**Table 4.1: Mean ratings and standard deviation of Social Studies students taught with collaborative learning and problem-solving Learning method.**

Group	Pre-test		Post-test		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean gain
Problem-solving Learning	47.56	10.31	57.32	10.20	9.76
Collaboration Learning	46.36	10.83	64.80	9.83	18.44

Table 1 shows that the students taught Social Studies with collaborative learning strategy had a higher mean score of 64.80 as against students taught with problem-based learning strategy who had mean score of 57.32. Thus, collaborative learning strategy is more effective than problem-based learning strategy in teaching Social Studies.

**Research Question 2:** What is the effect of cooperative learning strategy on academic performance of Social Studies students?

**Table 4.2: Mean ratings and standard deviation of Social Studies students taught with cooperative and problem-solving Learning method.**

Group	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Problem-solving Learning	47.56	10.31	57.32	10.20
Cooperative Learning	47.42	10.10	59.84	8.00

Table 2 shows that students taught Social Studies with cooperative learning strategy had mean of 59.84 while those taught with problem-based strategy had mean score of 57.32. From the foregoing, cooperative learning strategy is more effective than problem-based learning strategy in Social Studies teaching and learning.

**Research Question 3:** What is the difference in the mean scores of Social Studies students taught with collaborative learning and cooperative learning strategies?

**Table 4.3: Mean ratings and standard deviation of Social Studies students taught with collaborative and cooperative learning methods.**

Group	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Collaboration Learning (treatment)	46.36	10.83	64.80	9.83
Co-operative Learning (treatment)	47.42	10.10	59.84	8.00

Table 3, shows that students taught Social Studies with collaborative learning strategy had higher mean score than those taught with cooperative learning strategy.

**Research Question 4:** What is the mean difference among students taught Social Studies using problem-based, cooperative and collaborative learning strategies.

**Table 4.4: Mean ratings and standard deviation of Social Studies students taught with collaborative, cooperative and problem-solving Learning**

Group	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean difference	Rank Order
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Collaboration Learning	46.36	10.83	64.80	9.83	18.44	1 <sup>st</sup>
Co-operative Learning	47.42	10.10	59.84	8.00	12.42	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Problem-solving Learning	47.56	10.31	57.32	10.20	9.76	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Table 4, shows that collaborative learning strategy has the highest mean score of 64.80, followed by cooperative learning strategy with a mean of 59.84, while problem-based had 57.32 respectively.

## Discussion

The findings of the study have shown that activity based learning strategy facilitated and enhanced learning among Social Studies students. Collaborative learning strategy was found to be more effective in relation to cooperative and problem-based learning strategies. Similarly, the cooperative learning strategy was also found to have enhanced students' achievement test scores and more effective than problem-based. These finding is in line with Iji, Ogbola and Uka (2014) who found that activity based strategy improves students' performance. Schoolscape (2010) reported that activity-based learning strategy increased students' cumulative achievements. The finding of this study is also in agreement with Khan, Muhammad, Ahmed, Saeed and Aman (2012), who reported that activity based learning strategy significantly, improved students' academic performance than the prevalent traditional or expository teaching method. They recommended that activity-based strategy of teaching should be used to teach students that are developing higher order skills in order to maximize the benefits of these approaches.

The finding of this study also shows that the teaching strategies (collaborative, cooperative and problem-based) are all effective. However, the findings also indicated that collaborative learning approach was more effective than the cooperative learning strategy. This finding is in agreement with the Danjuma (2015) who reported that collaborative learning strategy heightens students' academic performance. Sofeme (2012) reported that cooperative learning strategy is an effective strategy because it involves cooperative attitude among the students which enhances learning. Also, Kegan (2000) reported significant improvement in academic performance of students, nothing that cooperative and problem-based learning strategy enhanced standard of education.

Notwithstanding, this study shows that the application of collaborative learning, cooperative and problem-based learning strategy improves students academic performance. This is because the strategies are all activities-based; they involve interaction between the teacher and the students, creating room for students to ask questions, listen and get clarification. Steen (2003) observed that these strategies stimulate learners to fully take part in classroom activities. Sofeme (2012) also noted that these activity based strategies are flexible and can be modified to suit students with specific needs or any teaching learning environment.

## Conclusion

The study revealed that teaching strategies: collaborative, cooperative and problem-based learning improve students' academic performance in Social Studies. The study also shows that these teaching strategies are more interactive and effective than the conventional method.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Education managers should regularly organize seminars and workshops for training of teachers on activity-based learning methods in order to update their knowledge and application of activity-based learning methods.
- ii. Teacher education institutes should design compulsory courses that deal with collaborative leaning, cooperative learning and problem-solving learning approaches of curriculum implementation.
- iii. Social Studies teachers should be properly guided in adapting any of collaborative learning, cooperative learning or problem-solving learning approaches in areas of classroom management, child-centred and activity-based learning approaches.

- iv. Teachers should also be prepared to teach the students social skills as some of them may have difficulty in relating to other students even when they have brilliant ideas to share.

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