
Social Interactionist Approach: A Learner Centered Strategy for Functional Education and National Development

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Abstract

The history of education is characterized by successive innovations that are aimed at implementation of higher quality for full potentiality. To prepare the learner for further education and long life learning, there has to be a shift from the traditional teaching and learning approach to modern educational technique. Such techniques center on social efficiency and advancement that aim at empowering learner for societal development. Functional and quality education is the bedrock of development in any nation. With various ethnic groups distributed across different religious beliefs in Africa and the entire world at large, there is need for the use of effective teaching and learning strategy such as social integrationist approach. The strategy is effective at enhancing students' knowledge of national unity for development. This study therefore, determined the effective teaching of concepts using social integrationist approach. The pretest-posttest, control group quasi experimental design was adopted. Participants were one hundred and fifty junior secondary 111 students purposively selected from four secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria. One research question was raised and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at $p < 0.05$ level of significance. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, of frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Inferential statistics of Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the hypotheses. This paper therefore, brings to light the fact that social integrationist approach is an effective teaching and learning strategy which could help promote national development using functional educational strategy as a tool.

Keywords: Social interactionist approach, functional education, learner centered, national development, ethnic group

Introduction

Functional education can be seen as the process of teaching, training and learning in Schools and Colleges for the development of knowledge and skills so as to prepare individuals to live happily with themselves and others in any society. Hence, education is the panacea for national development of any nation. With various ethnic groups distributed across different religious beliefs in Africa and the entire world at large, there is need for the use of effective teaching and learning strategy such as social integrationist approach. The strategy is effective at enhancing students' knowledge of national unity for development. Ifeancha & Nwagwu (2009) cited in Onifade & Imhonopi (2013) observe that Nigeria's efforts at achieving national integration have remained largely unrealized. In the same vein, Ugoh & Ukpere (2012) remark that there have been series of policy failures in the country

due to inability of the government to identify the needs of its citizens.

The perennial problems of poverty, unemployment, insecurity, inequality among others have bedeviled every developmental effort in Nigeria. In an attempt towards attaining national unity and development through managing the problems of ethno-religious crises and insurgencies in Nigeria, various policy frameworks have been put in place by the Federal government (Alapiki, 2005; Maduabum, 2006). One of such efforts is the policy frameworks of Federal Character act number 34 of 1996 which aims at implementing and enforcing the Federal Character Principle of fairness and equity in the distribution of public posts and socio-economic infrastructures among the various federating units of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Ejibunu, 2007; Maduabum, 2006). Similarly, the introduction of Federal Character policies in Nigeria, according to Bamidele & Ikulege (2004) cited in Ugo & Wilfred (2012) is to foster unity, peace, equal ability and equal access to state resources and promote the integration of the less advantaged states for better improvement and good conditions of living in the country.

The fact remains that these hostility, tribal and communal conflicts have become threat to national unity and stability of the nation and sub region by extension. Functional education remains the core of national stability in a world where people continually encounter problems such as racism, sexism, prejudice and discrimination in the society. If a country has vision of developing to become a great, it must develop human being to have that high level of intellectual capacity that can make them to be leaders in all fields of their endeavour.

Social Interactionist Model

George Herbert Mead, as an advocate of pragmatism and the objectivity of social reality is considered a leader in the development of interactionism. It is a blue print which is designed in advance for providing necessary structure and direction for the teacher to realise the stipulated objectives. Social interactionist models are instructional methods used by teachers in the classroom to facilitate group work. It is a student centered teaching approach that allows students to interact with each other in a structured task manner. The models of teaching of this category emphasize the importance of social relationship of the person and are based on the assumption that social relation is the vehicle of education. School curriculum must directly address issues of the informal social interactions because other ethnic groups of students prefer to study together in small groups of teaching that embraces and accommodates learners from all cultural backgrounds (Gorski, 2008; Meier, 2005).

Social Interactionist Model

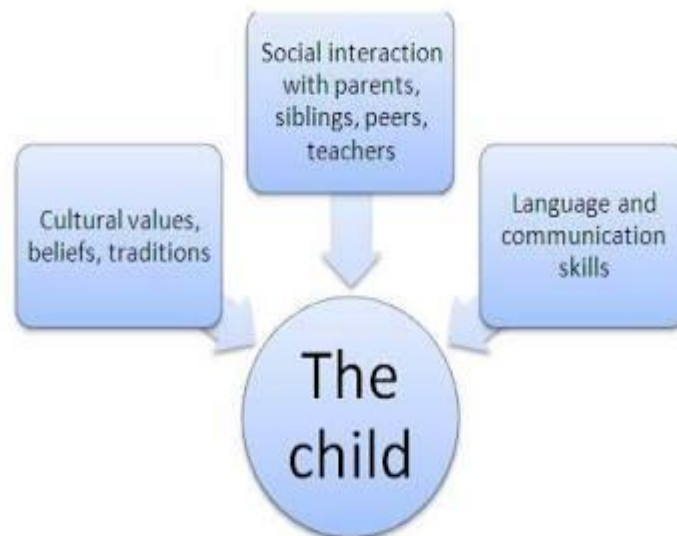


Fig 1: Source: tadahgroup.wordpress.com

The above model is child centered and engages in a higher level of thinking. Social interaction with parents, siblings, peers and teachers are all centered around the child. Because the method is student centered, it promotes more opportunities for students to participate in cooperative learning in the classroom. Sticking to just one model in the views of Ogunbiyi, Ojebiyi and Salako (2009), would unthinkably create a monotonous learning environment and not everyone might enjoy the lesson. The three most common strategies include group project, group discussion and cooperative learning. Hence, it has become necessary for educators to adapt to a new style of learning. It can be beneficial to students that work well in a cooperative setting, and can be used to promote leadership, team work and problem solving skills. Learners are therefore, encouraged to reflect on what they learn and how they learn it.

Concept of Functional Education

Functional Education is the type of education that equips the recipient with the knowledge and skills needed for the performance of productive task. It is one that helps the society meet their developmental needs. Good (1999) defines functional education as education for which there is an anticipated application, which thus assumes that the learner has immediate meaning, transferable into action of his learning activities. It is a kind of education that emphasizes practice more than theory. Eze (2003) posits further that the Nigerian education has not been functional because too much emphasis has been placed on theoretical and academic knowledge. There is undue emphasis on the possession of certificates instead of on what one can do. Buttressing this fact, Ukeje (1992) states that the educational processes are geared primarily toward preparing candidates for examinations. Through this process of education, the products acquire knowledge and facts with little real understanding and without saleable skills. The result of this dysfunctional education is that schools turn out graduates without useful knowledge and skills who become alienated from their own environment.

The main innovation in Nigerian post-independent educational development was the National Policy on Education, commonly referred to as the 6-3-3-4 education system which replaced the previous 6-5-2-3 system. This education was inadequate and unsatisfactory to the nation's yearnings and aspirations. This system was replaced by the 9-3-4 education system. The main objective is to diversify educational services for Nigerian children. The curriculum for the secondary schools, especially the junior section, is more technical and vocationally oriented, while the Senior Secondary School curricula is more academic. Students who passed the Junior Secondary Schools will then be admitted to the Senior Secondary Schools (NPE, 2004). However, the current situation on ground is far from being ideal because the system is suffering from shoddy and poor implementation.

Agi & Yellowe (2013) Opine that functional education is important to the development of human resources. This implies that for any nation to leave the realm of mediocrity, its citizens must be re-orientated and equipped with the necessary man power through adequate and effective education which in turn brings about healthy and transformed society. Such education show case the innate ability of the total man. It becomes more miserable than death to handover a developing nation into the hands of an unprepared adult due to lack of empowerment of its youths. Emphasis is therefore laid on theoretical knowledge rather than practical knowledge due to lack of skills acquisition strategies on the part of the educators. Adequate information, skills acquisition, entrepreneurial attitudes and participation are the elements needed in empowering the youth. Youth empowerment is an indirect means of investing wealth, peace and security into the nation. When a youth is fully empowered, family and nation are positively affected and he or she could be a responsible adult and a patriotic citizen. These could only be possible through an empirical model of education which is capable enough to eradicate or reduce under development.

National Development

The term national development is very comprehensive; it includes all aspects of life of an individual and the nation. It is holistic in approach. It is a process of reconstruction and development in various dimensions of a nation and development of individual. National development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. A country is classified as developed when it is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry. It implies improvement in material well-being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future, it also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances.

Gboyega (2003) captures national development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. According to Lawal & Abe (2011), national development is viewed as a process of societal advancement where improvement in the well-being of people is generated through strong partnerships between all sectors inclusive of corporate bodies and other groups in the society. It stresses the fact that a nation develops in relation to its achievement in education. This is because, education, in the life of a nation, is the live wire of its industries and also the foundation of moral regeneration and revival of its people. Education is a crucial sector in any nation. Being a major investment in human capital development, it plays a critical role in long-term productivity and growth at both micro and macro levels.

The implication of the declining quality of education at all levels has far reaching negative

impact on a nation's moral, civic, cultural and economic sustainability. In the Nigerian context, for the educational sector to contribute meaningfully to national development, there should be proper funding of the three tiers of government. Samalia & Murtala (2010), states that something urgent has to be done in the educational sector. The main focus of this paper remains the contributions of education to national development. In spite of series of development strategies put in place by successive governments, and sometimes with good intentions, all attempts to generate meaningful development proved futile (Lawal & Abe, 2011).

Two years after independence, the first National Development Plan policy was formulated between 1962 and 1968 with the objectives of development opportunities in health, education and employment and improving access to these opportunities, etc. This plan failed because fifty percent of resources needed to finance the plan was to come from external sources, and only fourteen percent of the external finance was received (Ogwumike, 1995). Development depends very much on human knowledge and skills. This must be such that a high quality of education and training is achieved for a large majority at a reasonable price and the context and quality of such education and training should be relevant and adequate to the country's development needs. Literature on development stresses the axiom that it is the people who develop and that unless there are large numbers of suitably qualified people, development cannot take place in any society.

Materials and Methods

Research Question

A research question was raised to guide the study:

- (1) Can interactionist approach promote peaceful co-existence among citizens?

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were generated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between students' perception of interactionist approach and their academic performance.

H0₂: There is no significant relationship between students' perception of interactionist approach and their level of moral values.

Research Design

The study adopted the pretest-posttest, control group, quasi-experimental design.

Selection of Participants

Participants were one hundred and fifty junior secondary III students purposively selected from four secondary schools in Ogun State, South West region of Nigeria.

Research Instruments

Two instruments used to generate and collect data for this study were: Multicultural Concepts Knowledge Test (MCKT) and Multicultural Concepts Attitude Scale (MCAS). For the Multicultural Concepts Knowledge Test, the reliability coefficient using Cronbach alpha 20 is $\alpha = 0.78$. Using Cronbach alpha, the Multicultural Concept Attitude Scale has its reliability coefficient $\alpha = 0.82$.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Inferential statistics of Pearson product moment correlation was used to

test the hypotheses.

Findings

Table 1: Answering Research Question-How Do Students Perceive Interactionist Approach?

No	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	STD.D
1	Most students have interest in the approach	90 (60.0)	43 (28.7)	10 (6.7)	- (0.0)	3.39	97
2	The approach could improve learning	82 (54.7)	43 (28.7)	8 (5.3)	2 (1.3)	3.29	1.06
3	The approach promote moral values in students	80 (51.6)	49 (32.7)	6 (4.1)	- (0.0)	3.18	1.20
4	The content of Study is related to the society	80 (53.3)	53 (35.2)	24 (16.0)	10 (6.7)	3.06	1.27
5	The approach is just like any other strategy	34 (27.7)	27 (18.0)	39 (26.0)	24 (16.0)	2.53	1.13
6	The approach must be used at all school level	72 (48.0)	47 (24.7)	21 (14.0)	12 (0.0)	3.29	2.49
	Weighted Average	3.12		78%			

Table 1 show that most students have interest in the use of interactionist approach ($\bar{x} = 3.39$), that the approach could improve learning ($\bar{x} = 3.29$), that the approach could promote moral values in students ($x = 3.18$) that the content of study is related to the society ($\bar{x} 3.06$), that approach is just like any other strategy ($\bar{x} = 2.53$) and that the approach must be used at all school level ($\bar{x} = 3.29$). The weighted average is 3.12 which is equivalent to 78%. This implies that the perception of the students is on the positive side and can be rated up to 78. Hence, there is a significant relationship between students' perception of the approach and their academic performance. Positive perception amounts to high performance.

H01: There is no significant relationship between students' perception of interactionist approach and their academic performance.

Table 2: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation

Variable	N	Mean	Std D	R	P	Remark
Interactionist approach group	75	19.71	10.28	.733	.000	Remark
Control group	75	16.43	5.80			Significant

Table 2 revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between students' perception and their performance using the interactionist approach ($r = 0.733$; $P < .05$). Therefore, H01 is rejected. The positive relationship implies that the better the students' perception, the better their academic performance.

H02: There is no significant relationship between students' perception of Social Studies and their level of moral values.

TABLE 3: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC)

Variable	N	Mean	Std D	R	P	Remark
Interactionist approach group	75	19.71	10.28	.378	.000	Significant
Control group	75	15.98	3.77			

Table 3 revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between students' level of moral values and their perception of Interactionist approach ($r = 0.378$; $p < .05$). So, H02 is rejected. The positive relationship implies that the better students' perception of the approach, the better their moral values. A cursory look at the social studies curriculum at all levels of education shows that the subject is tailored towards ensuring good citizenship education. Attitudes, values, skills, behaviours such as respect for leaders, parents, love, patriotism, dignity of labour and other positive attitudes are promoted in social studies.

Conclusion

Education is regarded as a tool that can accommodate the ethnic, cultural and religious diversities of a country and enhance societal development and transformation. Education is the only tool that can be used to effect the much desired national development. Therefore, remains the core of national stability in a world where people continually encounter problems such as racism, sexism, prejudice and discrimination in the society. The role of education in national integration cannot be overemphasized. This is because in any democratic society, education remains the core of national stability, security and an instrument for political, economic growth and development. Therefore, there is need to promote interactionist strategy for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. The focus of this paper is the contributions of education to national development and the researchers have identified specific ways in which education contributes to national development. For education to impact positively on national development, some recommendations have been made and if duly followed, will address the crises rocking the Nigerian educational system.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are hereby made:

- Prominent among the solutions is that government should be determined to make provision for effective funding of education. The Federal Government should endeavour to earmark 26% of the total budget for educational development as recommended in the United Nations Organisation.
- Education should be a tripartite affair and responsibility of federal, state and local governments. At the same time, the private sector should also be made to participate in the funding.
- The federal government should take the funding of research activities seriously by increasing the budgeting allocation to educational sector.
- Subject associations should organize seminars, workshops and conferences where modern teaching techniques should be discussed.
- More interactive learning, participatory strategies should be promoted to compliment the conventional teaching strategy.

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