

## ASSESSMENT OF FRESH AND RETURNING UNDERGRADUATES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING OF SOCIAL STUDIES IN UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, NIGERIA

BY

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### Abstract

*This study examined fresh and returning undergraduates' attitudes towards learning of Social Studies in University of Ilorin, Nigeria. 100 level and 400 level students were sampled as the fresh and returning Social Studies undergraduates respectively using quota sampling technique. A researcher self-developed questionnaire was used for data collection while data collected were analysed using percentage. Mean was used to answer research questions while hypothesis was tested using Chi-square at 0.05 significance level. Findings of the study revealed that fresh undergraduates have positive attitude towards learning of Social Studies; returning undergraduates also have positive attitude towards learning Social Studies; and there was no significant difference between fresh and returning undergraduates' attitudes toward learning of Social Studies in the university. It was therefore concluded that there was no significant difference between fresh and returning undergraduate attitudes towards learning of Social Studies in the university. It was therefore recommended that emphasize should be laid on affective domain purposely to enhance learning and internalization of its contents in order to foster positive attitudes in Social Studies students.*

**Keywords:** Assessment, Attitudes, Fresh and returning undergraduates, Social studies

### Introduction

The attitude of students towards the study of Social Studies in tertiary institutions has become a concern that many social scientists in education have to examining the subject plays crucial roles in human orientation and societal sensitisation. The need to adapt our education to the needs of the Nigerian society started before independence. The circumstances surrounding the introduction of Social Studies into Nigeria can be identify as one major factor that has influenced the way the subject has been variedly taught in tertiary institutions.

The Social Studies Educators are experts have knowledge of principles, theories and practical social skills that allow their professional background and preparation to influence what they perceived and taught in Social Studies. The educators had been concerned about the lack of relevance of the Nigerian educational system in meeting the pressing economic, social and cultural needs of the nation. This was the reason behind the re-evaluation of the educational system and the curriculum of the school and objectives that are relevant to the society. There is need to develop right societal value. Nigeria with many beautiful and very interesting cultures and values that need to be keeping, uphold alive, and transfer from one generation to another. Social Studies Education has been seen one of the medium for the transfer of the right Nigerian

cultures and values to make an individual responsible to the society in which he lives (). Learning of Social Studies enables individuals to recognise their society as the social institution that must be influenced, preserved and developed.

Jekayinfa (2005) corroborated the assertion by presenting social studies as the study of the interaction between man and his physical and social environment and it is also a tool for understanding the culture, social values and citizenship thereby fostering national unity. However, the teaching of the subject as it is today in Nigeria is regarded as general knowledge that integrates contents of History, Geography, Sociology, Civic Education, Economics, Political Science among others. Moreover, Social studies is Value-oriented subject and can therefore be tailored towards the realization of values that are inherent in its curriculum. This can be done through the inculcation of right type of attitude and values which Amos and Kayode (2013), perceived as standards that guide a person's judgement and behaviour in a community or society such as sense of appreciating the beauty of both natural endowment and manmade activities, tolerance, cooperation, obedience, responsibility and patriotism among other social values.

Researchers such as Olokooba (2019); Abdulsalam (2016); Gambari and Yusuf (4014) among others have concentrated much on the cognitive aspect of teaching in our schools because of the importance attached to success in public examination, however, there is an interplay between the cognitive and affective areas of teaching. For example, Gunsch (2005) has shown that there is a relationship between interest and developments in different school subjects, therefore, it is believed that there are favourable attitudes towards Social Studies which may influence to a certain extent the uptake of knowledge internalization of its contents into practical skills and social life. Nigeria in the bid to better the lives of her citizenry extended the teaching of Social Studies education to tertiary institutions where the youths are nurture. Since the adaptation of social studies in Nigeria tertiary institutions, Nigeria has not become a problem-free nation. Nigerian youths especially graduates and undergraduates have not fully internationalized those worthwhile attitudes and values that will champion their leading this country to the promise land.

Social Studies education lays emphasis on affective learning domain (Mezieobi, 2015), the teaching of Social Studies Education at tertiary institutions pave way for the students to be trained to appreciate the need for unity in diversity, develop the spirit of togetherness and interdependence of members of both local and national communities. In addition, the objectives of Social Studies at the higher level include the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills that will make them become effective and functional members of the society. This will help them to master their environment, explore and harness the available resources in their environment in other solve societal needs and bettering the lives of the people (Jekayinfa, 2014).

Social Studies Education does not limit the students to mastery of their local and national communities rather it exposes them to knowledge of the wider world, that is, the international communities, thus give them the opportunity of adapting and appreciating other people's cultures. In summary, Social Studies Education at the tertiary level prepares the students for positive relationship in the environment, the world of work and understanding of everyday living problems they will face as adults in their communities. The Nigerian universities Social Studies curriculum would be transformative when it adapts contents to contemporary challenges, equips

learners with skills for wealth creation that can train graduates to resolve critical impending social problems (Mezieobi, 2015).

Social Studies Education is the science of doing or making creative ideas, social inventions and objects that will enable man interact with environment efficiently (Orisa, 2014). It is the place of Social Studies education to ensure that Social Studies graduates are orientated to be resourceful for national development through making profound contributions to national development in response to current challenges of the nation in the technological, social, economic and political sphere. For instance, there are security challenges, environment depletion, food crisis, leadership instability, electoral violence among others that require solutions from the Social Studies education stakeholders.

Social Studies objectives at tertiary institution in Nigeria channel to yield positive result to the improvement of authority through the productive development of human potentials, who can contribute ideas, opinions, materials and facts for addressing Nigeria's present challenges. The Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Policy on Education (2014) recommends that tertiary institutions are instituted for the training of middle and high level of man power or the development of the nation. The National University Commission (2014), minimum standard for Social Studies is in support with the national policy on education. At the tertiary level of education, the curricular is focused on developing middle level manpower with the objective of realizing the goal of national development.

Most contemporary perspectives on attitudes also permit that people can also be conflicted or ambivalent toward an object by simultaneously holding both positive and negative attitudes toward the same object. This has led to some discussion of whether individual can hold multiple attitudes toward the same object (Wood, 2000). Researchers have stressed the importance to assess the full range of variables that motivate toward certain behaviour (De Young, 2000; Stern, 2000; Zelezny & Schultz, 2000). Attitudes therefore must be seen as relevant and appropriate guides to the behavioural choices that an individual face in order for activated attitudes to affect behaviour.

According to Wade (2002), if students lack interest, then their retention of ideas and concepts will be minimal. In addition, low priority from teachers will lead to less time dedicated to Social Studies in the daily curriculum (Wade, 2002). Ultimately, much of the problems facing teachers may lead to poor learning attitude by students towards Social Studies. In the opinion of Shams (2008), if the teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of the subject matter meaningful for students, then an interest will be sustain. Another cause of poor students' attitude is the teacher's direct influence on this attitude.

Factors such as the provision of instructional materials, including computers, and the use of resource persons enhanced the teaching, learning and internationalization of concepts. It also became known that the attitude of students towards the learning of social studies, lack of funds to organize fieldtrips and lack of well-equipped libraries and social studies resource rooms hampered the effective teaching and learning of concepts in Social Studies (Ayaaba, 2013).

Hence, the researcher decided to conduct wholesome study on fresh and returning undergraduates' attitudes towards learning of social studies in university of Ilorin. The attitude of students towards the study of Social Studies in universities is an unsatisfactory state of affairs and imbalance in the educational sector in particular and the nation's development in general. Social studies as a core subject in the junior secondary school level suggest the importance the government, parents and students themselves attach to the study. Despite ongoing changes in school curriculum design, teaching methodology and teacher development which have helped to improve the perception of Social Studies, some negative attitudes still persist among many students who see Social Studies as dull, boring and irrelevant to their lives. The phenomena increase in students' attitude towards the study of social studies in university of Ilorin should not be allowed to remain for too long unattended to. The need to motivate students to develop positive attitude towards the study of social studies in the university and to create a conducive environment for studying social studies is not disputable and cannot be over-emphasized.

The unfortunate thing is that students' attitude towards the study of social studies in schools is fraught with many problems. There is a general belief that whenever students perform poorly in their courses the teacher has not really taught them well. People hardly look at the problem from the point of view of the student's attitude towards the courses but only from the teachers' attitudes. Akey (2006) points out that engagement in school is important in promoting student success and learning and that a number of factors in the school environment foster high levels of engagement. Researchers have attempted to identify and measure students' attitude towards Social Studies and to identify what influence their attitude and this calls for the need to understand why students like or dislike Social Studies (Peters, 2005; Khaled, 2007). This is problematic in relation to the role that Social Studies is expected to play in national development. If Social Studies is to continue to have support of government and the general public, then it is desirable for students to have positive attitudes towards the discipline, as the negative attitude towards it can ultimately result in its removal from the school curriculum. It is perhaps possible that, the importance of Social Studies as an academic discipline has not been properly understood by students, teachers, parents and the general public leading to it being either neglected or considered optional course although it is a core subject (Melendez, Beck & Fletcher, 2000).

Several researchers have undertaken studies relating to specific aspects of pupils' attitude towards Social Studies and other related subjects. Jekayinfa (2007) has reported that high grade in Social Studies at lower forms is a factor that can pull students to History in the secondary schools in Nigeria. Adeyemi (2015) noted that some students are losing interest in Social Studies because of the career in the labour market, poor remuneration of the teachers, low-esteem of the teachers in Nigeria context, exclusion of the Social Studies as a core subject in senior secondary school curriculum. Most of the Social Studies undergraduate students do not chose to study Social Studies Education in the universities. They were offered admission by the university to study Social Studies Education. Accepting Social Studies was not because they have changed their mind from the course they chose to study. While filling their admission forms to Social Studies Education that they were offered admission to study by the university but because admission into universities is highly competitive and see this offer as opportunity to just have a degree certificate. It was obtained from the admission records of some university in south-west zone in Nigeria. Despite the low cut off mark of Social Studies Education compared to other courses such

as Sociology, Psychology, Political Science, Economics, among others, less than 1% of candidates normally choose Social Studies as a course of studies in JAMB/UTME, few student secured admission to other Departments in Nigeria Universities. This is a source of worry to all concerned, is Social Studies Department a dumping ground for non-proficient students? This study therefore was conducted to investigate the comparative analysis of fresh and returning undergraduate attitudes towards the study of Social Studies in university of Ilorin.

### **Research Questions**

Attempt was made to answer the following questions in the study.

1. What is the attitude of fresh undergraduates towards learning social studies?
2. What is the attitude of returning undergraduates towards learning social Studies?

### **Research Hypothesis**

This hypothesis was postulated to be test in this study.

HO: There is no significant difference between fresh and returning undergraduate attitudes towards learning of social studies in university of Ilorin.

### **Methodology**

This research adopted descriptive survey type. The inclusion of survey type is to examine comparative analysis of fresh and relating undergraduates' attitude towards learning Social Studies. This study was to compare the attitude of both fresh and returning Social Studies Education undergraduates in University of Ilorin and descriptive survey was used to compare two variables in a short period. This research work has its concern population on all Social Studies Education students, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin. It covers all 100L, 200L, 300L, & 400L Social Studies undergraduates in University of Ilorin. The population consisted of about 475 Social Studies Education students in the year 2018//2019 academic session. The researcher selected 100 level as the fresh and 400 level as the returning Social Studies undergraduates in University of Ilorin. The researcher selected (57) 100L and (61) 400L students through quota sampling techniques.

The researcher used a self-constructed questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to elicit data on fresh and returning undergraduate attitude towards learning of Social Studies Education in University of Ilorin. The question was titled "Fresh and Returning Undergraduates' Attitude Questionnaire". The questionnaire was a closed ended type in design. The questionnaire was divide into two sections; A and B. Section A consisted of the demographic data of the respondents. Second B comprised items answered by the respondents. Four point likert-scale type measuring scale was used (VT, T, ST, U, VU) where; Very true, true, somewhat true, untrue and very untrue of which the respondents are expected to tick. The supervisor and other two lecturers in the department of Social Sciences Education to verify its validity, in terms of content, grammar, items presentation and organization as well as the relevance of the items of the instrument, validated the questionnaire. Thereafter, the comments of the supervisor and other lecturers were effected in order to ensure what it ought to measure.

Reliability means dependability or trustworthiness. In contextual meaning, an instrument consistently measures whatever it is meant to measure to the degree. There are various method of

ensuring reliability of an instrument; the researcher made use of the 300 level Social Studies Education students who will not be among the instrument used as freshers and returning undergraduate students (University of Ilorin). The result of the reliability was 0.94 using Pearson Product Movement Correlation Coefficient which means the instrument is reliable.

## Results

**Research Questions One:** *What is the attitude of fresh undergraduates towards learning of Social Studies?*

**Table 3:** Mean Response on attitude of fresh undergraduates towards learning of Social Studies

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
57	62	129	95.12	17.142

As shown on the Table 3, with a mean response of 95.12 within the range of 91 to 150, the attitude of fresh undergraduates towards learning of Social Studies was positive.

**Research Questions Two:** *What is the attitude of returning undergraduates towards learning of Social Studies?*

**Table 4:** Mean Response on attitude of returning undergraduates towards learning of Social Studies

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
61	45	129	94.77	16.906

As shown on the Table 4, with a mean response of 94.77 within the range of 91 to 150, the attitude of returning undergraduates towards learning of Social Studies was positive.

## Hypothesis Testing

**Hypothesis One:** *There is no significant difference between fresh and returning undergraduates' attitude towards learning of Social Studies.*

**Table 5:** Chi-square summary Table on difference between fresh and returning undergraduates' attitude towards learning Social Studies

ATTITUDE		LEVEL			Chi Square Value	P Value	Decision
		100	400	Total			
Negative	Count	26	19	45			
	Expected Count	21.7	23.3	45.0			
	% within ATTITUDE	57.8%	42.2%	100.0%			



	% within LEVEL	45.6%	31.1%	38.1%			
Positive	Count	31	42	73	2.614	0.12	<b>Do not Reject</b>
	Expected Count	35.3	37.7	73.0			
	% within ATTITUDE	42.5%	57.5%	100.0%			
	% within LEVEL	54.4%	68.9%	61.9%			
Total	Count	57	61	118			
	Expected Count	57.0	61.0	118.0			
	% within ATTITUDE	48.3%	51.7%	100.0%			
	% within LEVEL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

As shown on Table 5, with the chi-square value 2.614 significant at 0.05, and p-value: 0.12 greater than the significant value 0.05,  $H_{01}$  is not rejected. This connotes that there is no significant difference between fresh and returning undergraduates' attitude towards learning of Social Studies.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that fresh undergraduates have positive attitude towards learning of social studies and knowledge, skills and attitude acquired from social studies can fulfill their life ambition. This finding as revealed against Noorris-Holt (2002), in a study asserted that many students begin studying Social Studies in Junior High Schools with eager anticipation, but due to prejudiced and misconceptions many students soon lose interest at the further levels of education. This findings is also in line with Khaled and John (2004), that the students in middle school and high school valued Social Studies, students were not as negative toward Social Studies as indicated by previous researchers.

The findings of the study revealed that returning undergraduate have positive attitude towards learning social studies and claimed that social studies equipped it learners to solve both personal, societal, national and global problems he or she may encounter in the society. This finding as revealed supports Ayaaba (2013), that college students had a positive attitude towards teaching and learning of Social Studies. Factors such as instructional materials, including computers and the use of resource persons enhanced the teaching, learning and internalization of concepts. This finding is also in line with Zainab (2009) there positive attitude of students toward their Social Studies lessons. The students said they find the lessons interesting, easy, enjoyable and important.

The findings also revealed that there is no significant difference between fresh and returning undergraduates' attitude toward learning of social studies in University of Ilorin. The finding against IEJME (2018), initial students exhibit a positive attitude towards mathematics (and other school subject) but their attitude becomes less positive as the students move forward to higher level of education.

## Conclusion

It could be deduced from the findings of this study that fresh undergraduate attitude towards learning of Social studies in the University of Ilorin is positive. While the returning undergraduate attitudes towards learning of social studies in the University of Ilorin are also positive. It could also be concluded that there is no significant difference between fresh and returning undergraduate attitudes towards learning of social studies in the University of Ilorin.

## Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, it was therefore recommended that:

1. Social Studies Educators should use the class to enhance the teaching, learning and internalization of its contents in order to foster positive attitude in Social Studies students.
2. Social Studies student should be exposed to real life problems; personal, societal, national and global problems that will develop in learners positive attitudes towards practical solutions to the problems and foster their beliefs that social studies can fulfill their life ambition.
3. Social Studies curriculum in the university should be restructured to reduce the rate of concept repetition so that social studies student will not see social studies as a boring course.

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