
**EFFECTS OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY ON
UPPER BASIC STUDENTS' ATTITUDE AND
ACHIEVEMENT IN SOCIAL STUDIES IN
KATSINA METROPOLIS, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The persistent poor performance of students in Social Studies especially in upper basic school examination (JSCE examination) which could be attributed to the quality of instructional practices in the subject motivated this study. This study focused on the effects of formative assessment strategy on upper basic students' attitudes and achievement in Social Studies in Katsina metropolis, Nigeria. The study used quasi-experimental research designs, specifically the Non-equivalent pretest-posttest group design which involved two groups. A simple random sample of 86 Upper Basic 2 (UB2/JSS 2) students was selected for the study from a population of 5,996 students. Then two intact classes were selected as experimental and control groups using balloting technique. 44 students were in the experimental groups and 42 students in the control groups. There were 25

male and 19 female students in the experimental groups and 24 male and 18 female students in the control groups. Altogether, 49 male students and 37 female students participated in the study. A self-developed Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT) which comprised of 50 items and Students' Attitudes towards Social Studies Questionnaire (SATSSQ) made up of 21 items were the instruments used for data collection. While three (3) research questions guided this study, data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The findings revealed that formative assessment leads to an increased positive attitude towards Social Studies and improved students' achievement in Social Studies. It was recommended that upper basic school teachers should be trained and re-trained to update their knowledge in the use of formative assessment for making the teaching and learning of Social Studies more interesting and rewarding.

Keywords: Formative assessment, Social Studies, Students' attitudes, Achievement.

Introduction

Basic education in Nigeria is considered to be one of the rights of the individual as well as an instrument per excellence for effecting national development. The levels of education in Nigeria include; early childhood education, basic education (lower and upper basic), senior secondary education and tertiary education. While the lower basic is the primary school, the upper basic (UB) education is also known as the junior secondary (JS). In Nigeria, the upper basic is the last three years of the basic education system and students are usually admitted into this level after they might have passed the primary (lower basic) school leaving certificate examination.

The curriculum at the upper basic level is geared towards the development of good virtues, some forms of literacy and vocational skills that would make learners to be law-abiding and contributing

meaningfully to national development. At this level, some of the subjects taught include: English Language; Mathematics; Basic Science; Basic technology; Social Studies; Pre-Vocational studies among others (FRN, 2014). Social Studies is a dynamic subject with major focus on how to reshape the thinking patterns of man for individual and societal development. The above position was seen to be in line with Ibhafidon (2011) view of Social Studies as a subject that equips students' with the capability to make sound judgments and take appropriate actions that will contribute to sustainable development of human society. It is a subject that is geared towards self realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national unity, national consciousness among other forms of behavior of positive value in the society in which the individual lives. The subject innovative and versatile nature makes it capable enough to address and modify the dysfunctionalities of the inherited educational system, hence its position as a core subject in Nigerian curriculum. However despite the importance attached to Social Studies in Nigeria school curriculum, there are challenges associated with the teaching of the subject. Literature search revealed that one of the challenges is on classroom instructional practices. Without effective teaching could the subject still be considered as innovative and versatile?

The problems associated with Social Studies instructional practices made the Katsina State Government to organize workshops from 2010-2017 in Katsina metropolis for teachers to improve their instructional practices. Despite these efforts there is still persistent poor achievement in Social Studies in the Junior School Certificate Examination (JSCE). According to Education Resource Centre, Katsina State, the JSCE result between 2012 and 2017 showed students inability to score high in Social Studies in Katsina metropolis. The failure rate ranged from 60.00% to 84.25%. Report from National Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) (FRN 2007) indicates that most students are generally weak in their understanding of basic concepts regarding topics in culture, social issues, science and technology. The NERDC report revealed that practicing and pre-service teachers of Social Studies

encounter great difficulty when teaching these contents. This observation requires that investigation be carried out on how to teach these concepts for better understanding and achievement by students'. This is because curriculum contents that are not assimilated by students can lead to poor achievement.

Social Studies instructional practices in most Nigerian upper basic schools have continued to be the conventional practices (Ibhafidon 2011). This practice has been found to promote superficial learning and thus learners' inability to internalize the learned knowledge, attitudes and values. Therefore for learners' to be able to internalize learned knowledge, attitudes and values, Social Studies should be taught using contemporary classroom practices that enable the learners to conceptualize, analyze and synthesizes issues. Aside the use of conventional practices in the teaching of Social Studies that have been observed to be responsible for the poor achievement of students in Social Studies in Katsina metropolis, other factors include; non utilization of instructional materials, student's lack of interest in the subject (Ekpenyong, 2015), lack of appropriate assessment techniques (Udonkpong, 2015); general apathy by students due to perception of Social Studies as very easy and parents' perception of the subject (Okon, 2014). These observations necessitated this present study that investigated the effects of formative assessment strategy on students' attitude and achievement in Social Studies.

Formative assessment also known as "assessment for learning" is a range of formal and informal assessment procedures employed by teachers during the learning process in order to modify teaching and learning activities to improve student attainment. Formative assessment focuses on classroom practices in which evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers and learners to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, than the decisions they would have taken in the absence of the evidence that was elicited (Black & Wiliam, 2009). Formative assessment is concerned about the efficacy of teaching and learning, it is against the traditional goal-oriented evaluation model. It emphasizes students' initiative and comprehensive development in cognition, emotion and attitude, it also

emphasizes the process of students' learning, and hence the teacher and learners can both obtain timely the relevant feedback information which gives chances to students to participate in modifying or planning the upcoming classes. In formative assessment, both the teacher and students are the subjects of assessment under the guidance of the teacher, the students are expected to actively summarize and reflect on their learning, and the teachers have also correspondingly changed their roles from the arbiters to the facilitators. Formative assessment tools include self-assessment forms, learning portfolios, peer reviews, quizzes, questionnaires among others.

At the center of formative assessment is the concept of feedback. According to Singh, (2010); Olowe (2010) and Ebuoh (2014) feedback is information transmitted to students that allow or encourage students to organize their thoughts or behaviours to improve their learning. This explained why Black (2015) concluded that the impact of formative assessment is dependent on the strength of the feedback provided to students about their learning and teachers about their teaching. Therefore feedback provided through formative assessment has significant benefits when motivating students, helping students improve their learning, reinforcing students' work and helping students to develop a positive attitude towards school subjects. The present study thus made feedback an integral part of the study.

Attitude may be defined as a predisposition to respond favourably or unfavourably concerning a given person or object. It is an internal belief that influences personal actions which is learned through a person's experience (Adu, 2012; Mawak 2012; Duyer, 2014; Kingsley, 2015). Therefore when a person believes that a particular person or object is beneficial to him or her, a positive attitude is developed. This is in line with Udonkpong (2015) observation that perception determines the direction of attitude formation. To the author, the perception a student has about a subject influences the students' attitude towards that subject. Teachers thus need to make classroom instructional practices interesting to motivate student's interest in school subjects. To this end, it can be concluded that teachers' instructional practices can

influence students' attitude toward school subject.

The focus of this study is on the effect of formative assessment on students' attitudes towards Social Studies. Attitude towards Social Studies denotes interests or feelings towards studying Social Studies. Many factors could contribute to student's attitude toward studying Social Studies. To Sanaa (2013) and Okon (2014) some of these factors include; teaching methods, teachers' attitude, influence of parents, gender, age, cognitive styles of learners, career interest among others. This suggests that there is a relationship between attitude and instructional practices. The trust of this research therefore is to determine the effect of formative assessment strategy on students' attitude towards Social Studies.

This study is anchored on the theory of socio-cultural learning by Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky (1978) postulated that learning is best achieved by determining what the students' have already internalized known as zone of proximal development (ZPD) and what students' are capable of learning through the help of an educational intervention. The present study employed Vygotsky's theory because lessons within the formative assessment strategy is; learner-centered and designed such that efforts is made by the teacher to ascertain prior knowledge as a prerequisite for new learning as well as offering remediation where necessary.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the effects of formative assessment on Upper Basic Students' attitude and achievements in Social Studies in Katsina Metropolis, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- i. Investigate the attitudinal disposition of students towards Social Studies before the experiment;
- ii. find out the attitudinal disposition of students towards Social Studies after the experiment; and
- iii. determine the effects of formative assessment practices on achievement of upper basic 2 students' in Social Studies.

Research Questions

In order to achieve these purposes, the following research questions

were answered:

- i. What is the direction of attitude of the experimental and control groups before the experiment?
- ii. What is the direction of attitude of the experimental and control groups after the experiment?
- iii. What are the achievements mean scores of the experimental and control groups before and after exposure to treatment?

Methods

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design, specifically the non-randomized pretest-posttest control group design. The choice of this design was based on the fact that intact classes were used and as such, the design provided major control against factors like differential selection of students, testing procedures, instrumentation and statistical regression that could constitute a threat to the internal validity of the experiment. The selection was based on students in UB 2 suitable to study the concept 'Culture, Social issues, Science and Technology within the students' curriculum. Students that were not administered the pretest were not used for the experimental study and the provision of major controls were introduced through the use of a Social Studies teacher in the experimental school. The population for the study consisted of all public upper basic school class two (UB2) students in Katsina metropolis, Nigeria. The sample for the study was randomly selected from a population of 5,996 UB 2 students distributed among 15 public secondary schools in Katsina metropolis. The choice of upper basic 2 students was informed by the fact that the topics practicing and pre-service teachers of Social Studies find difficult to teach are within upper basic 2 Social Studies curriculum. Also students at this level were assumed to have acquired some basic concepts, knowledge and skills in Social Studies to enable them answer the pretest items. A sample of 86 students in intact classes from one school (Government secondary school, Nasinta) within Katsina metropolis was selected. The selection of classes into control and experimental group was done by balloting. This study used 44

students in the intact class as the experimental group and 42 students as the control group. There were 25 male and 19 female students in the experimental group, 24 male and 18 female students in the control group. Altogether, 49 male students and 37 female students from the school participated in the study.

Social Studies Achievement Tests (SSAT) and Students Attitude towards Social Studies Questionnaire (SATSSQ) were the instruments for data collection. The Social Studies achievement test (SSAT) has two sections. Section A which sought demographic data like gender and section B which was a multiple choice, objective test consisting of 50 items with four options lettered A-D adopted by the researchers from NECO questions from 2014-2018. This tests was used for the pre-test and post-test. The SSAT covered the Social Studies themes selected for the study. These themes were culture, social issues, science and technology. In addition, essay items were constructed each week as a teacher-made test. These essay questions were used for assessing students' understanding of subject-matter content and their ability to reason with their knowledge of the concepts under investigation. Students' attitude towards Social Studies questionnaire (SATSSQ) had two sections. Section A which sought the demographic data like gender and the section B which contained 21 items constructed to determine students' attitude towards Social Studies. The SATSSQ had a 4 point modified likert-type response scale. The respondents (Social Studies students) indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement on several statements. The scale included: Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The content validity of the SSAT was ascertained through the use of a table of specifications and by subjecting the instrument to experts' scrutiny. Three experts in Social Studies and two test constructions, an expert in Research Measurement and Evaluation Unit from the University of Jos, Nigeria, were requested to vet the items in terms of comprehensiveness, clarity of words, appropriateness of language to the class levels and plausibility of distracters. The observations of the experts were strictly adhered to accordingly. While the content validity for SATSSQ was also ascertained by subjecting the instrument to the scrutiny of three experts in Social

Studies and two test constructions, an expert in Research Measurement and Evaluation Unit from the University of Jos, Nigeria, to make sure that the statements used relate only to students' attitudes towards Social Studies, construct validation for the SATSSQ was ascertained through factor analysis.

The reliability of the internal consistency of SSAT was determined using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient technique. The SSAT was administered to 54 JS 2 Social Studies students of Government Day Secondary school Batagarawa, Batagarawa Local Government Area of Katsina state. The scores obtained through test-retest were used to compute the coefficient of internal consistency of SSAT at 0.05 level of significance. A reliability coefficient of 0.962 was obtained for the SSAT. The reliability of internal consistency of SATSSQ was ensured using the Cronbach alpha procedure. The researcher administered the final SATSSQ to 54 upper basic 2 Social Studies students from Government Day Secondary school Batagarawa. The responses were used to compute the coefficient of internal consistency of SATSSQ and the result was 0.966.

A senior Social Studies teacher with a B.Ed degree in Social Studies was trained in a five-day training programme by the researchers as a research assistant to assist in the study. These qualities were necessary to ensure that the teacher had good knowledge of the subject matter and also possessed the professional qualification required for the successful conduct of the study. The objective of the training was to enable the teacher acquire the necessary competencies for implementing the experimental conditions. The items that were addressed during the training included; the objectives of the schedules, review of the lesson plan prepared by the researcher, review of contents and topics, familiarization with the key concepts in the study, review of teacher and students' activities, test administration, scoring of tests papers, feedback and remediation. Before the start of the experiment, students that did not form part of the experiment were used in illustrating to the research assistant the techniques of formative assessment strategy. On the fifth day of the training, the research assistant was allowed to demonstrate the use of the strategy in

teaching the experimental group and the use of conventional method with the control group before the commencement of the experiment.

The SATSSQ was administered within 25 minutes followed by the SSAT which lasted for 50 minutes as a pretest to both groups to determine student's attitude towards Social Studies and to ascertain student's prior knowledge of the concept, culture, social issues, science and technology before the treatment was given to the experimental group. During the period of testing, the researchers and research assistant ensured that the students were not cheating. Students were required to tick the options that suit their attitude towards the subject as well as circle the correct option out of four alternatives provided for each question on the question paper. After the time allocated for the test, the scripts were collected, marked and scored using a marking scheme.

The Formative Assessment schedule was developed by the researchers, using the upper basic 2 curricula. The scheme of work was split into weeks and days. Sixteen lessons were taught within nine weeks; weekly formative assessments; feedback and the remediation procedure, which focuses on the correction of misconceptions. The daily topic was developed into a lesson plan. The objectives were tested using formative assessment during the lessons. Assessments were conducted at the beginning of each lesson, during lesson delivery to monitor students strengths and weaknesses and at the end of the lesson. Assignments were given at the end of each lesson, weekly feedback and remediation of areas of difficulty encountered during instruction were addressed. The schedule was subjected to evaluation by three secondary school Social Studies teachers and two experts from the University of Jos.

While the experimental group was taught using this Formative Assessment strategy, the control group were exposed to a conventional method of teaching. Although they were taught all the topics using lesson plans and were given a monthly test, there were no feedback and remediation. The researchers frequently visited the classes during each treatment session to ensure that the research assistant complied with the instructions given in the schedule. At the end of the nine weeks of teaching, the posttest on

SATSSQ and SSAT was administered to both the experimental and control groups. The posttest lasted for one hour fifteen minutes, twenty-five minutes for the SATSSQ and fifty minutes for the SSAT. The pretest and posttest results on the SATSSQ and SSAT were compared to obtain the gain scores of the experimental and control groups. The scripts were collected after the posttest and given to the researchers who scored them personally using the marking scheme.

For SSAT, two marks were awarded to every correctly answered item in the SSAT. The highest obtainable mark was 100 while the lowest score was 0. The scores in the first administration of the test were the pretest scores and the score in the second administration of the same test were the posttest scores. With respect to SATSSQ, scoring, for positive items were; Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points; Agree (A) = 3 points; Disagree (D) = 2 points Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. For negative items, it was: Strongly Agree =1 point; Agree =2 points; Disagree = 3 points; Strongly Disagree = 4 points. The highest scores were 84 and the lowest scores were 21. The data collected were analysed using frequency counts, means, standard deviation, t-test, and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) techniques. The results are presented in tables.

Results

Research Question One: What is the direction of attitude of the experimental and control groups before the experiment?

Table 1: Distribution of Attitude of the Experimental and Control Groups before the Experiment

S/No	Items	Control Pre-test					Experimental Pre-test				
		SA	A	D	SD	Total	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	Social Studies is my favourite subject	00	00	16	25	41	00	00	22	22	44
			(39.0%)	(61.0%)	(100%)			(50%)	(50%)	100%	
2	I like attending Social Studies Lesson	00	00	16	25	41	00	00	00	44	44
			(39.0%)	(61.0%)	(100%)				(100%)	100%	
3	During Social Studies lesson I copy note in other subjects	16	25	00	00	41	22	22	00	00	44
		(39.0%)	(61%)			100%	(50%)	(50%)			100%
4	I am happy when the Social Studies teacher is absent from the class	16	25	00	00	41	22	22	00	00	44
		(39.0%)	(61.0%)			100%	(50%)	(50%)			100%
5	I usually complete my Social Studies assignment in time	00	00	24	17	41	00	00	44	00	44
				(58.5%)	(41.5%)	(100%)			(100%)		100%
6	I enjoy studying Social Studies on my own	00	00	16	25	41	00	00	22	22	44
			(39.0%)	(61.0%)	100%			50%	(50%)		100%
7	I enjoy pasting Social Studies write -ups on the wall of my room	00	00	16	25	41			22	22	44
			(39.0%)	(61.0%)	100%			(50.0%)	(50.0%)		100%

Table 1 showed that the direction of attitude of students' in both control and experimental groups towards Social Studies before the experiment tilted toward the negative. This is because the responses to all the items by students' from both groups indicated students' disfavour for the subject.

Research Question Two: What is the direction of attitude of the experimental and control groups after the experiment?

Table 2: Direction of Attitude of the Experimental and Control Groups after the Experiment

S/No	Items	Control Pre-test					Experimental Pre-test				
		SA	A	D	SD	Total	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	Social Studies is my favourite subject	00	28	15	43	26	26	1	00	45	100%
			(65.1%)	(34.9%)	(100%)		(40.0%)	(57.8%)	(2.26%)		
2	I like attending Social Studies Lessons	00	00	36	7	43	19	25	1	00	45
			(83.7%)	(16.3%)	(100%)		(42.2%)	(55.6%)	(2.5%)		100%
3	During Social Studies lesson I copy note in other subjects	7	36	00	00	43	00	1	8	36	45
		(16.3%)	(83.7%)			100%	(2.2%)	(17.8%)	(80.3%)		100%
4	I am happy when the Social Studies Teacher is absent from the class	16	27	00	00	43	00	1	10	34	45
		(37.2%)	(62.8%)			100%	(2.2%)	(22.2%)	(75.5%)		100%
5	I usually complete my Social Studies Assignment in time	00	00	15	28	43	32	11	1	1	45
			(34.9%)	(65.1%)	(100%)		(71.1%)	(24.4%)	(2.2%)	(2.2%)	100%
6	I enjoy studying Social Studies on my own	00	00	28	15	43	37	7	1	00	45
			(65.1%)	(34.9%)	100%		(82.2%)	(15.6%)	(2.2%)		100%
7	I enjoy pasting Social Studies write-ups on the wall of my room	00	00	15	28	43	00	00	21	24	45
			(34.9%)	(65.1%)	100%			46.7%)	(53.3%)		100%

Table 2 showed that after the experiment, the direction of attitude of students in the control group towards Social Studies remained negative. Although there was shift in the direction of attitude either from strongly disagree to disagree, or from agree to strongly agree, students' response in this group still indicated a disfavour towards Social Studies after the experiment. On the other hand, the direction of attitude of students towards Social Studies in the experimental group after exposure to treatment tilted towards the positive direction. Although the direction of attitude towards the last items (I enjoy pasting Social Studies write-ups on the wall of my room) before and after the experiment remained the same (negative direction), the response of students in this group indicated a favour for Social Studies after the intervention. This is contrary to the students' responses before the experiment.

Research Question Three: What are the achievements mean scores of the experimental and control groups before and after exposure to treatment?

Table 3: Achievement Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control groups before and after exposure to Treatment

Groups	Mean	SD
Control Pre Test	42.29	2.78
Control Post Test	47.42	1.31
Experimental Pre Test	43.81	2.86
Experimental Post Test	82.32	3.63

The result of the analysis in Table 3 shows the achievement mean scores of students before and after the experiment. From the result, the control group had a mean score of 42.29 and a standard deviation (SD) of 2.78 before the experiment, and a mean score of 47.42 with a SD 1.31 after the experiment. The experimental group had a mean of 43.81 and SD of 2.86 before exposure to treatment and 82.32 with SD of 3.63 after exposure to treatment. While the differences in the mean scores between the experimental and control group in favour of the control group before the experiment was

3.61, the difference between the experimental and control groups after the experiment in favour of the experimental group was 34.90. This suggested that students exposed to formative assessment strategy (experimental) have higher academic achievement than students exposed to conventional strategy (control).

Discussions

The findings revealed that the direction of attitude of students' towards Social Studies in both control and experimental groups before the experiment tilted toward the negative direction. This is because students' responses to all the items by both groups indicated students' disfavour for the subject. However, while the direction of attitude of students' towards Social Studies in the control group after the experiment still tilted towards the negative direction, the direction of attitude of students' towards Social Studies in the Experimental group after the experiment tilted towards the positive direction indicating students' favour for Social Studies. This findings is in line with Thiveos and Moroz (2001), Hansberry and Moroz (2001), Khaled (2013), Ayaaba (2013), Ciftci (2013), Benjamin (2014) and Udonkpong (2015) findings that attitude of students towards school subjects can be influenced positively when classroom instructional practices is changed from teacher centred approach to student centred approach. Therefore the study has shown that formative assessment in the form of divergent classroom questions, assignment, weekly test, feedback and remediation make students develop love for Social Studies and thus has positive effects on student's attitudes towards the subject. This in turn enhanced learning and improves achievement.

The findings revealed that while the pre-test and post-test achievement of students in Social Studies in the control group were generally low, the posttest scores of students in the experimental group is higher than students' pretest scores. The poor performance in the pre-test of students' in both groups is in line with the National Examinations Council (NECO) Chief Examiner's report that candidates exhibited significant weakness in culture, social issues, science and technology. This is also in agreement with NERDC

(2007) observation that culture, social issues science and technology are areas of difficulty for practicing and pre-service teachers of Social Studies during classroom instructional practices. Again, the poor performance of students in the control group is in agreement with the findings of Teresa-de-Sousa (2007), James and Folorunso (2012), Mehmood, Hussain, Khalid and Azam (2012), James, Amos and Adeniyi (2013), Kline (2013), James (2014), Benjamin (2014), Ebuoh (2014), Moyosore (2015), Ugodulunwa and Okolo (2015), Kivuti (2015), Eremina, Reginald (2016), Amina and Hafida (2017), Ozan and Kincal (2018), Huisman (2018), Chemeli (2019) and Kenyon (2019). These scholars revealed that conventional method used in teaching students, is ineffective and could lead to poor performance of students'. This explains the poor performance of students in the control group who were taught using conventional classroom practice and the high performance of students in the experiment group who were taught with formative assessment strategy. However this finding is contrary to Ruland (2011) findings that conventional method is supportive of effective and efficient subject learning.

The result of this study also shows that the use of formative assessment improved students' understanding of the concepts taught and the strategies employed improved their achievement. With formative assessment, teachers are able to assess students often and to re-teach concepts students' find difficult to learn in culture, social issues, science and technology. this agrees with the earlier findings of James and Folorunso (2012), James, Amos and Adeniyi (2013) and James (2014), that students who are taught using formative assessment, perform better than those taught using the conventional method. Generally, the findings of this study corroborated earlier findings and demonstrated the efficacy of the Formative Assessment Strategy developed and validated in this study.

Conclusion

The focus of this study was to establish the efficacy of formative assessment strategy for increasing upper basic school students'

attitude towards Social Studies and improving their achievement in the subject. The ultimate goal was to solve the problem of poor achievement in Social Studies, particularly in the concepts, culture, social issues, science and technology. The findings of the study has shown that formative assessment can be used to increase students' attitude towards Social Studies in order to improve achievement of upper basic school students in the concepts culture, social issues, science and technology in particular and Social Studies in general.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that Social Studies teachers should be trained and re-trained on the development and use of formative assessment strategies in teaching for effective implementation of upper basic school curriculum in Social Studies. This will go a long way in meeting the learning needs of students in the subject and solving the problem of fluctuation in the performance in social studies at upper basic school level of education in Nigeria.

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