

**ADDRESSING 21ST CENTURY NEW NORMAL
SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM CLIMATE
FOR PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The toll of Corona Virus tagged COVID-19 pandemic on education programmes, instructional delivery and schooling generally among on the global community was enormous with implications for the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals, (SDGs). Hence, efforts to revamp instructional delivery through technological innovations of different types such as the use of social media platforms, e-learning, electronic media, virtual learning, variants of distance learning, to mention few constitutes 'new normal parlance'. This was met with mix feelings at inception with such efforts as dispersion from the traditional Face-to-Face (F2F) teaching learning. It is against this background that this study examined Social Studies classroom climate in the new normal as a precursor of SDGs attainment. This study adopts a blend of quantitative and qualitative research design was adopted in assessing the Social Studies classroom climate and attainment of SDGs among Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo, Oyo State students. Purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting participants for the study totaling 87 male and female students of different categories. Data collected from the study were analyzed

quantitatively and qualitatively, using tables, frequency counts, simple percentages, content analysis and verbatim reporting. Findings revealed among others, that female (58, 70.73%) dominated the participants as against their male counterparts (24, 29.27%); content analysis shows that there is relationship between Social Studies new normal classroom practice and the attainment of SDGs; verbatim reporting also indicated that participants were favourably disposed to the variants of new normal instructional delivery. It thus behooves on all stakeholders to imbibe the new normal teaching learning variants to ensure improved educational programme delivery and the attendant attainment of the SDGs in Nigeria.

Keywords: 21st century; New normal; Social Studies classroom climate; Instructional delivery; SDGs

Introduction

The vogue in the present dispensation is the use of slogans in expressing views about a number of emerging issues and fluids of realities pervading human endeavours in the 21st century. As such, it is a common parlance especially in Nigeria and the global community to talk of new normal which is a product of the health hazard/pandemic that shook the global community to its foundation tagged COVID-19 that is, Corona Virus that broke out in the last quarter of the year 2019 and transcended epidemic because of its magnitude to the World Health Organization's pronouncement of it as pandemic.

Reiterating this, WHO (2020) was of the view that the brake out of COVID-19 pandemic witnessed in the year early 2020 transformed into a global health emergency and the accompanied extraordinary socio-economic changes in virtually all the countries of the world. The said changes literarily transformed into the new normal'vogue (Nguyen, Pho, Luong, & Cao, 2021) are not without attendant effects on the education sector. Also, there were close down of social gatherings, religious gatherings,

sporting activities, business activities, tourism and above all, educational programmes (Oduolowu, 2020; Oladiti, 2021; Salawu, 2021). The aforementioned of course necessitates a rethink on the way and manner things were done which eventually translated into a new normal vogue.

In education process, the idea of Face-to-Face (F2F) interactions within the four walls of the classroom initially limited the school attendance (Oyewo, 2021) while efforts were made to expand the frontier of knowledge through the adoption of various means such as Television and Radio programmes, online teaching, virtual learning, syndicate groups, among others accompanied with innovations of different types, scientific and technological procedures inclusive. Reiterating this fact, Allen (2019) submitted that for several years, education was limited to stifling classrooms with black boards and uncomfortable desks. Today, students of all ages and experience levels have far more options including online courses which have brought improvement in education and teaching learning process (p.16). Consequently, instructional delivery generally has to key into the new normal with various school subjects adjusting their instructional delivery system. Considering the place of Social Studies in the comity of other school subjects owing to its nature, features, themes, methods, flexibility of its curriculum and the associated accommodating of emerging issues, the subject cannot but be new normal compliant.

Corroborating this view, Okam (2011) adduced that Social Studies as a subject is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of human beings as they relate with both the social and physical environment, expected to have its take on Social Studies classroom teaching generally. If the assertion of Egan and Effiom (2022) is anything go by, Social Studies which is designed for equipping learners with positive values, social attitudes, norms and knowledge aimed at generating and developing citizens that are intelligent, responsible, self-directing to contribute their quotas to and improved group living through the development of their potentials among others cannot but be part of the new normal instructional delivery.

Among the proclivity of Social Studies that paramount for the

present dispensation as observed by Umaru, Egan and Iorapu (2015) is its systematic study of the parent subjects, Social Sciences in a coordinated and integrated fashion capable of preparing learners who are mostly youths for constructive participation in issues such as citizenship as well as democratic ethos preservation. This of course is needed for them to be both national and global citizens (Ajogbeje & Oladiti, 2019). To this, Egan and Effiom concluded that the curriculum instruction of Social Studies is encapsulated in equipping learners with the problem-solving skills imbued in the subjects' content areas. Subscribing in this direction, Oladiti, Ogunjimi and Adedigba (2021) adduced that Social Studies by its nature and peculiarities deals with the fluid of realities that human beings are being confronted with and have capability of inspiring right attitudes, skills values, moral, competences, among others in learners. It has also been canvassed that Social Studies as a subject is charged with ruminating and exploring societal dynamism and the attainment of knowledge improvement among the citizens (Akanni, 2022). It was also the contention of scholars such as Imogie (2010) and Akpochafo (2013) that the subject among others, is responsible for fostering new and integrated approaches directed at finding recourse to societal issues in all ramifications, new normal dictates inclusive. Godabe (2016) capped it up by stating that the introduction of Social Studies in Nigerian schools was premised on among others, inculcation and transmission of those values, attitudes as well as belief system considered as desirable for enhancing continuous growth and development of the nation.

The foregoing is akin to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs. SDGs has been described as a global response to problems confronting human beings in the society in the 21st century. Such challenges include but not limited to the issue of poverty, food security, gender issue, youth employment issue, education comatose, refugee, among others which were part of the erstwhile programmes, i.e. Millennium Development Goals strategy (MDGs), hence, the transformation to SDGs (Omolewa, 2019; Oladiti, 2022). Without mincing words,

achieving the best from the SDGs in the 21st century is but a product of functional educational programmes to be orchestrated by functional school subjects. In this wise, Social Studies as an emerging school subject with its distinctive features cannot but play a significant roles in this issue. More so, as part of the 17 goals and 169 objectives of SDGs, quality education occupied the 4th position in the pyramid of SDGs goals, hence, SDGs-4 (Oladeji, 2022) is committed to students' diversity, quality learning and education along the life course.

Among others, Social Studies according to Oladiti and Ajiboye (2019) stand tall among the comity of other school subjects. Instructional delivery in most Nigerian schools have been criticized as characterized by the old school parlance of limiting instruction to the usual teacher-centered approach characteristic of F2F interactions (Oduolowu, 2020). Salawu (2021) also identified one of the problems of instructional delivery that affected education programmes in the wake of COVID-19, the apparent indifference to technological innovations in instructional delivery. The propensity of this instructional mode which was described by Adetoro (2022) as one-size-fit all instructional modes leaves much to desire in the classroom climate in the present dispensation. Advocating for child-centered and technological-driven instructional modes as against the F2F in school instructional delivery, studies such as Abate (2013); Melese (2016); Melese (2019); Ginja and Chen (2020) affirmed that despite the potential benefits inherent in technological-driven modes of instruction for students such as online lectures, off-campus teaching, on-campus teaching, virtual teaching, distance learning, among others, it is not widely used in the contemporary classroom as compared to that of one-size-fits-all instruction. The implication of this for new normal classroom practices is enormous. However, it was the contention of Best Online Universities, LLC. (2021) and Teach.com (2021) that utilizing such platforms may influence learning outcomes arising from reductions in teachers and learners interactions to some extent due to lack of motivation and engagement by some students

during instructional delivery most especially, new entrants yet to adapt to learning environment. This however may not be the case especially in the present time where different categories of learners at different levels are being daily exposed to technological advancements. Arising from the seemingly inconclusive and divergent views on the issue of new normal instructional delivery, it becomes pertinent to examine the classroom climate of Social Studies Pre-service teachers in the 21st century as a means of achieving the SDGs and national development.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed at examining classroom climate in the 21st century as part of the new normal vogue with a view to improving educational programmes. The specific objectives therefore centre on the influence of new normal global best practices on the instructional delivery in Social Studies for attaining SDGs in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study is therefore anchored on the following research questions:

- i. What is the category of participation of the sampled subjects for the study?
- ii. Of what relationship is Social Studies classroom climate to SDGs attainment in Nigeria?
- iii. What is the students' disposition to new normal instructional delivery?

Methods

This study adopts a blend of quantitative and qualitative research design in assessing the Social Studies classroom climate and attainment of SDGs among Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo, Oyo State students. Through purposive sampling technique, participants for the study were drawn across Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PDE) students; Regular

Degree Social Studies Students and Part-Time Degree Students who were exposed to blended instructional delivery modes and were asked to evaluate the lecture series on social media platform created for the purpose. Thus a total of 87 male and female students of different categories who responded to the task were utilized for the study. Data collected from the study were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, using tables, frequency counts, simple percentages, content analysis and verbatim reporting.

Results

The first research question was answered quantitatively, using table, frequency counts and simple percentages while the research questions 2 and 3 were answered qualitatively, using content analysis and verbatim reporting.

Research Question 1: What is the category of participation of the sampled subjects for the study?

Table 1: Analysis of Participants' Level of Participation by Category

S/N	Programme of Study	M	%	F	%	Total
1.	PDE 5203	03	50.00	03	50.00	06
2.	SSE 301 (RD)	13	30.95	29	69.05	42
3.	SSE 106 (PTD)	08	23.53	26	76.47	82
	Total	24	29.27	58	70.73	100

*PDE stand for Postgraduate Diploma in Education; RD for Regular Degree; PTD for Part Time Degree respectively. Source: Author's Field Work 2022.

Table 1 revealed that the participants cut across three categories of programmes ranging from the PDE, RD to PTD students of Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo in Affiliation with University of Ibadan, Ibadan and Ekiti State University, Ekiti respectively. Three different courses, PDE 5203, SSE 301 and SSE 106 were involved with female (58, 70.73%)

dominating the participants as against their male counterparts (24, 29.27%).

Research Question 2: Of what Relationship is Social Studies Classroom climate to SDGs attainment in Nigeria?

Content analysis from the study revealed that there is strong relationship between Social Studies classroom climate and attainment of SDGs in Nigeria. Participants were of the views that a combination of several methods with technological innovations can make for easier comprehension and assimilation while such efforts aids learning and assists learners to learn on the go, at their own pace, wherever they are and at their convenience. Also, the use of ICT-compliant methods encompasses a blend of both teacher and learner centred approach which equips pre-service teachers for future endeavours, blended method can be employed for online distance learning and serves as an emergency provision for teaching and learning where there is social or physical restrictions, this constitutes a step in the right direction with regards to global practices in teaching and learning. It also makes it easier for students to learn bulk of things through internet as against the obstacles usually faced in the traditional teaching and learning. More so, combining physical class with variants of online tutoring is loaded, touching and thought-provoking as the usual stifling classroom with blackboard and uncomfortable desks characteristic of education in the past have been broken through series of online strategies with significant improvement in teaching and learning as there is now improvement in education and teaching learning process which are assisting in solving real life situations.

Research Question 3: What is the students' disposition to new normal instructional delivery?

Verbatim reporting from the participants shows that various categories of students involved in the study were favourably disposed to new normal instructional delivery, male and female

alike. Views expressed in this direction include among others, the following:

'the method helped us in building our boldness by always carried (sic) us along when teaching and makes students centered method for teaching and giving us a chance to take part when teaching honestly pleased with everything. Very stimulating lectures and brilliantly taught. Very interesting case studies as well which made for interesting class discussions. The lecturer's teaching is well organized and presented which helped me to accept the new knowledge quickly'

Other views are:

it was an interesting discussion with the lecturer, making sure every students participate and learn the lecture method which was used to delivery (sic) the course was very interesting and interactive; the method and technique used in the delivery of the course was interesting, encouraging, superlative, enjoyable and interactive and the lecturer in charge was quiet (sic) accommodating and approachable the course has increased my knowledge through the electronic means i.e. voice note on what group (sic) and through the physical class lectures were delivered through electronic devices and explanatory means for example, voice notes on Whats App group and through normal class and coordination'

Similar views denoting students' acceptance of the new normal teaching can be seen in the following:

the course delivery method has been (sic) in a way in which all the educational content has been conveyed perfectly and the lecturer who took the course was skillful with strong communication; the lecturer was teaching rather than instructing in most times and delivered through electronic means i.e. on group chat and also face to face, (the best traditional classroom delivery method), etc the idea of passing information and lectures through the WhatsApp

platform is a very interesting one and helped even those that doesn't attend class to comprehend'

In like manner, some students were of the view that they benefitted from the instructional modes as exemplified in comments such as:

'all the lectures have done well with us (sic) for the other courses, I learned (sic) a lot and benefit from the course, thank you for facilitating such a positive learning environment! I enjoyed the class and I am excited, the instructional delivery was quite interactive, the method employed helped in me (sic) ... the delivery of this course is majorly on positive side because I as a person I learn another skills in the of studying this course which is good listening skills and keep thinking on a subject matter the method used in the delivery of this course was somehow good the method was very fascinating with both physical and online method'

Commenting on the mode of instructional delivery and its contributions to effective learning, most of the participants applauded the new normal innovations employed. Among such comments can be seen in the following:

'the course was well understood due to the delivery method used, it was an interactive and interesting one interactive session during classes with utmost coordination which made learning easy and understandable the method used in the delivery of the course was interesting due to the fact that it was based on learners and teachers centered, the teaching methodology is scintillating and interactive and the tutor is ever approachable and educative emblem; the lectures were delivered through both electronics and democratized engagement classes that touches different classes of learners i.e. higher (sic), average and slow learners the lecturers (sic) were delivered through electronics means i.e. voice notes on What app group through normal class setting the course due to its mode of delivery has really broaden my knowledge and help me to develop more interest in Social Studies as a course.'

Discussions

The study revealed that there is strong relationship between Social Studies classroom climate and attainment of SDGs in Nigeria. Findings here corroborate Okam (2011) who affirmed that Social Studies as an interdisciplinary approach to the study of human beings is expected to have its take on Social Studies classroom teaching generally. Again, Egan and Effiom (2022) submitted that Social Studies through its proclivity is an integral part of the new normal instructional delivery. Umaru, Egan and Iorapuu (2015) was also of the view that Social Studies through its systematic study of the parent subjects, Social Sciences in a coordinated and integrated fashion is capable of preparing learners who are mostly youths for constructive participation in issues such as citizenship as well as democratic ethos' preservation which to Ajogbeje and Oladiti (2019) is needed for them to be both national and global citizens. Similarly, the study revealed that participants were favourably disposed to new normal instructional delivery. This study further authenticates previous studies such as Akanni (2022) who indicated that Social Studies as a subject is charged with ruminating and exploring societal dynamism and the attainment of knowledge improvement among the citizens while Akpochafo (2013) advanced that the subject among others is responsible for fostering new and integrated approaches directed at finding recourse to societal issues, new normal dictates inclusive. Social Studies according to Oladiti and Ajiboye (2019) stand tall among the comity of other school subjects.

Conclusion

This study has beamed searchlight on the 21st century Social Studies classroom in coping with the exigencies of the new normal in the event of the SDGs attainment. A panoramic view of the findings from the study have shown that the place of education programmes and instructional delivery cannot be over-emphasized in coping with the dictates of the new normal to drive SDGs attainment in Nigeria. Obviously, the SDGs goals and objectives are laudable one for the global community but their

achievement is tied to relevant educational programmes, contents and pedagogy as well as versatile school subjects.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby put forward. There is the need for a paradigm shift from the traditional F2F classroom interactions to accommodate the evolving innovations imbued in the technological advancements. Doing this requires a classroom climate that is new normal compliant. Hence, promotion of global practices of child-centered methods combined with the use of electronic media cannot be over-emphasized in all school subjects. Social Studies as a subject charged with accommodating emerging issues cannot but key into the new normal instructional delivery.

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