

Influence of Research Methodology Teaching on Developing Skills in Problem Identification among Colleges of Education Social Studies Students in Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the “influence of teaching Social Studies research methodology on student’s research skills development in colleges of education in Niger state, Nigeria”. The focus of the study is to examine the influence of teaching Social Studies research methodology on identification of sources of research problems: The study was guided by one research questions, and one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. This study adopts descriptive survey design. The study also reviewed related literature, one theory and equally reviewed related empirical studies and comparison were made with the current study. The target population of the study was Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Niger State, Nigeria. A sample of 248 Social Studies students participated in the study. A researcher developed questionnaire with a reliability index of 0.860, titled “influence of Teaching Social Studies Research Methodology on Students research skills development in colleges of education in Niger state, Nigeria Questionnaire” (ITSSRMSRSDQ) was used for data collection in this study. One research assistants were employed who assisted in the distribution and retrieval of the questionnaire. The data collected for this study was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics include frequencies and percentage for bio-data, while mean standard deviation was used to answer the research questions, and as well, the hypotheses were tested using one sample t-test. This study found that teaching Social Studies research methodology has influence on development of skills of Sources of research problem identification; the hypotheses were retained. The study concluded that teaching Social Studies research methodology has influence on development of skills of sources of research problem identification; the study recommended that, Colleges of Education should also organize regular workshops and seminars to strengthen students’ abilities to recognize and define educational and social problems.

Keywords: Social Studies, research methodology, problem identification skills.

Introduction

Research problem identification is the foundation of any empirical inquiry. For Social Studies students, the ability to spot gaps in knowledge, frame educational problems, and convert practical issues into researchable questions is essential for producing meaningful final-year projects and for future professional practice as teachers and curriculum developers. Colleges of Education (NCE level) are the principal institutions that prepare prospective teachers; the research methodology course therefore plays a strategic role in equipping Social Studies students with necessary research competencies. However, subjective evidence and supervisors’ reports indicate many NCE Social Studies students continue to submit poorly formulated research problems vague topics, conflation of problems and objectives, or research questions that are neither clear nor researchable. This shortfall undermines the quality of research output, reduces the pedagogic value of the research methods course, and contributes to poor grades and limited research capacity among newly qualified teachers. This study examines the influence of teaching Social Studies research methodology on the development of skills for identifying researchable problems among Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Niger State, Nigeria. Specifically, it asks: To what extent does instruction in Social Studies research methodology improve students’ ability to



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identify researchable problems? The study tests the hypothesis that, there is no significance difference in the views of students on the influence of teaching Social Studies research methodology on identification of sources of research problem among students in Colleges of Education in Niger State, Nigeria. Research problem identification refers to recognizing, articulating, and refining an issue into a clear, researchable statement or question. Good problem identification requires situating the problem in literature, defining the scope, and ensuring empirical tractability. When students lack these skills, their research proposals often have unfocused aims, poor justifications, and ambiguous variables. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and experiential learning have been repeatedly recommended to develop higher-order skills such as problem formulation, critical analysis, and research reasoning (Barrows, 1996; Allen & Baughman, 2016). PBL uses real-world scenarios where students must identify and frame the problem, propose directions, and justify their research focus. Scaffolding (structured clinics, stepwise topic workshops) and guided practice (supervised proposal sessions) also show positive effects in similar educational contexts. Several studies in Nigeria and elsewhere have linked active teaching strategies in research methods to improvements in students' research skills (Abingki et al., 2017; Olayiwola, 2019). However, literature focusing specifically on problem identification at the NCE level in Social Studies is sparse most studies aggregate multiple skills (literature review, data analysis, and writing) into one outcome. This gap motivates the focused examination in Niger State. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) theory underpins this study. PBL posits that students learn best when confronted with real problems, which motivates inquiry and develops problem-solving skills. Teaching research methods with PBL elements case studies, real-world problem exploration, group tasks should therefore improve students' ability to identify research problems.

Objectives of the Study

1. Examine the influence of teaching Social Studies research methodology on skills of problem identification among students in Colleges of Education in Niger State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study answered the following question:

1. What are the views of Social Studies Students on influence of teaching research methodology on developing problems identification skills among Colleges of Education in Niger State Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significance difference in the views of students on the influence of teaching Social Studies research methodology on developing problem identification skills among Colleges of Education in Niger State, Nigeria.

Research Methodology

This study used descriptive survey design. The reason for using it is because it is usually used to determine and describe situation, events, and feelings or opinion of sampled respondents from a large population using questionnaires, check-list, and opinion falls and structured on the views of the population, is an efficient way of gathering data to help in addressing a research questions. Adamu, M. T. (2014). Opines on survey design that, it is a method usually adopted when handling a large population especially on issue of the moment that will involve systematic collection of data from population of study through the use of questionnaire. The population comprised all NCE III Social Studies students in the two Colleges of Education in Niger State (estimated total population $\approx$ 660). Using stratified random sampling a sample of 248 students was selected for the study. (Adjust sample sizes according to your actual population and the sample size calculation in your dissertation. The primary instrument was the Research Problem Identification Skills Questionnaire (RPISQ). RPISQ contains 20 items covering: (a) ability to spot gaps in literature/context, (b) ability to convert a broad topic into a focused problem statement, (c) ability to operationalize the scope and delimitations, and (d) competence in framing research questions/objectives aligned with the problem. Items used a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree). The instrument was validated by three experts (two Social Studies lecturers and one specialist in measurement and evaluation). Pilot testing (n = 10) produced Cronbach's α = 0.86. Prior to the administration of the instrument, the researcher trained two research assistants on the procedures for effective distribution, guidance, and retrieval of the questionnaires to ensure accuracy and uniformity in the data collection process. After the training, the researcher, together with the two research assistant's one assigned to each institution administered the instrument to NCE III students of Social Studies in both colleges. A total of twenty (5) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents to minimize the risk of mortality (loss of instruments). The researcher and the research assistants personally supervised the

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administration and collection of the completed questionnaires to ensure a high rate of return and data accuracy. All duly completed instruments were retrieved immediately after completion and prepared for statistical analysis. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistic. The bio-data of the respondents were analysed using simple percentage and frequency, mean and standard deviation were used to answer all the research questions, while, one sample t-test was used to test all the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance, where the p-value is higher than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypotheses was rejected, if otherwise the null hypotheses was retained.

Presentation of Results

1. Research Question One: What are the views of Social Studies Students on influence of teaching research methodology on developing problems identification skills among Colleges of Education in Niger State Nigeria?

To answer this research question, the data collected was subjected to descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. Table 1 presents summary of the result.

Table 1: mean and standard deviation on influence of teaching Social Studies research methodology on skills of Sources of research problem identification.

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD
1	Teaching of social studies research methodology has increased my confidence in identifying research problems.	3.27	.812
2	I have a better understanding of various sources for identifying research problems due to the Social Studies research methodology course I under took.	2.79	.923
3	I can effectively apply research methodology skills to identify research problems after taking course in Social Studies	3.04	.869
4	The course has improved my ability to evaluate the credibility of different sources for identifying research problems.	3.27	.812
5	I can integrate concepts learned in Social Studies research methodology when identifying research problems during writing my projects	2.79	.923
6	The teaching of Social Studies research methodology has enhanced my critical thinking skills in identifying research problems.	3.04	.869
7	My ability to create research problem has improved because of the social studies research methodology instruction.	2.96	.999
8	The course has increased my engagement with and understanding of the research literature related to Social Studies.	3.06	.889
9	I am better at identifying relevant research topics in Social Studies after taking research in Social Studies.	3.23	.945
10	The teaching of Social Studies research methodology has equipped me with practical skills for identifying research problems in my area of Specialization.	3.23	.880
Cumulative Mean		3.06	.892

Table 1 show that all the statements were above the decision mean of 2.5. This indicates that the respondents accepted all the statements as true. The aggregate mean of the items is 3.06 above the decision mean. This implies that the response to statement of research question one is in the affirmative. Thus, this means that the respondents perceived that teaching Social Studies research methodology has influence on development of skills of Sources of research problem identification among students in Colleges of Education in Niger State, Nigeria?

Testing of Null Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significance difference in the views of students on the influence of teaching Social Studies research methodology on developing problem identification skills among Colleges of Education in Niger State, Nigeria.

To test this null hypothesis, one-sample test was used and the result is presented in table 2

Table: 2 Summary of one-sample t-test on the views of students on the influence of teaching Social Studies research methodology on identification of sources of research problem

Respondent	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	P
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Social						
Studies	248	3.07	.411	21.753	247	.000
Students						

Table 2 shows that $t = 21.753$, $df = 247$, $p = .000 < \alpha = 0.00$. This indicates that the probability value (p) is less than the alpha level of significance ($p < 0.00$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected since the p -value is less than the alpha level. It therefore means that there was a significant difference in the views of students on the influence of teaching Social Studies research methodology on the identification of sources of research problems among students in Colleges of Education in Niger State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

This chapter discusses the findings of the study on the influence of teaching Social Studies research methodology on the development of research skills among students in Colleges of Education in Niger State, Nigeria. The discussion is organised around each of the research skill areas investigated. Finding number one indicates that the study found no difference on the influence of teaching Social Studies research methodology on research problem identification among students in Colleges of Education in Niger State, Nigeria. Evidently, table 1 which depicts statement in response to research question one, adjudged that teaching of Social Studies research methodology has increased student's: confidence in identifying research problems; better understanding of various sources for identifying research problems; effectively identify research problems; ability to evaluate the credibility of different sources for identifying research problems; identifying research problems during writing my projects; enhanced my critical thinking skills in identifying research problems; ability to create research problem; understanding of the research literature related to Social Studies; ability in identifying relevant research topics in Social Studies; and practical skills for identifying research problems. The corresponding hypothesis established a statistically significant difference between the views students in Federal College of Education and State college of education on the influence of teaching Social Studies research methodology on identification of sources of research problem among students in Colleges of Education in Niger State, Nigeria ($t = 21.753$, $df = 247$, $p = .000 < \alpha = 0.00$). This finding may be attributed to the structured, inquiry-based instructional approach used in teaching research methodology, where students are systematically guided through identifying societal challenges and knowledge gaps. Practical exposure to real-life problems likely enhanced their ability to recognize and formulate research problems. This finding aligns with previous research such as Ojini (2024). The implication of this finding is that Social Studies instructors should continue to adopt inquiry-based and participatory teaching methods when handling research methodology courses to further enhance students' skills in identifying relevant and feasible research problems.

Conclusion

The focus of this study is to investigate the “influence of Teaching Social Studies Research Methodology on Students Research Skills Development in Colleges of Education in Niger State, Nigeria”. The findings of this study highlight the critical role of teaching Social Studies research methodology in influencing student's research skills development in Colleges of Education. Given the findings of this study, the following conclusions are made: teaching Social Studies research methodology has impact on development of skills of sources of research problem identification; teaching Social Studies research methodology has influenced the developing skills on variable identification; influence their developing related literature review skills of students; and teaching Social Studies research methodology, to a greater extent, influences students' skills of data analysis among students and teaching Social Studies research methodology influence students' acquiring research reports development skills among students in Colleges of Education in Niger state, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance research skills development among Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Niger state, Nigeria.

1. Lecturers should keep emphasizing on practical exercises that involve spotting real-life issues as research topics. Colleges of Education should also organize regular workshops and seminars to strengthen students' abilities to recognize and define educational and social problems.

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