

# **AWARENESS AND USE OF TEACHING SKILLS AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS**

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## ***Abstract***

*During teaching/learning situations at the primary school level, the classrooms tend to look rowdy and children appear uncontrollable. This situation makes one wonder if their teachers know of teaching skills and their uses, especially when performing their teaching tasks. This study tries to investigate into the awareness and use of teaching skills among primary school teachers of social studies in Ondo State of Nigeria. Three hundred and forty-four teachers (344) randomly chosen from twenty (20) Primary Schools were involved in the study. Data were collected through the use of questionnaire and observatory teaching. Data analysis involved the use of percentages and one-way analysis of variance. The result revealed that the teachers had knowledge of teaching skills, but they rarely used them. Recommendations include, amongst others, the organization of on-the-job training or teaching workshops with emphasis on the frequent use of teaching skills for teachers, especially in the teaching of Social Studies.*

## **Introduction**

It is the objective of the dedicated teachers to be able to establish effective class control, motivate their pupils, arouse and sustain their interest all through their lessons and ensure that pupils understand what they teach and acquire knowledge with minimum problem. The teacher education curriculum focuses not only on the areas of the discipline but also on the ways and means through which the contents are imparted in very conducive learning situations. Methodology is the study of the various ways and means of teaching a subject, while skills mean the tactics which are normally supportive of the methods to give meaning and effect to the learning process. Teaching skills, ensure the continued attention of pupils when used appropriately. For example, skills such as reinforcement (whether negative or positive), would make for continued motivation amongst pupils. The skills of explanation and illustration with examples provide for learner's continued elucidation of the content of instruction.

Very often, when one goes to a Primary School, one observes the almost deafening noise of the pupils that disrupt teaching-learning processes. Teachers would like to control this situation with shouts of 'Shut Up', 'fe e', 'sit down', 'stop it' and so on. Many would result to use of whips and abuses. In most cases, these measures result to temporary silence on the part of the pupils.

If teaching skills help to reduce undesirable noise, boredom and inattentiveness of pupils in the classroom without disruption to teaching and learning, one would justifiably wonder whether Primary School teachers know what teaching skills are all about and whether there are occasions when they use the skills in performing their teaching tasks.

The study was carried out in all the eighteen Local Government Council Areas of Ondo State of Nigeria.

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Did Primary School teachers receive instruction in the teaching skills of planned repetition, set induction, uses of examples, closure, illustration, reinforcement and probing questions while they were in training?
2. Did Primary School teachers apply these named skills while teaching especially in social studies lessons?

### **Review of Literature**

Teaching skills, otherwise known as exposition skills, are the core of all pedagogical activities. The skills are so important to the teacher in the Primary or Post Primary or even in the tertiary institution that any emphasis on them can hardly suffice. Every teacher needs not only to possess knowledge of them, but also to use them in the teaching/learning process.

Brown (1973 a and b) said that teaching skills pivot on gaining and holding the attention of the learner. He went further to say that this objective can be best achieved by changing the levels of stimulation in the teaching situation by switching to different activities; introducing novel stimuli; varying the pace of the lesson; varying the modulation of voice; giving a wide range of non-verbal gestures, facial expressions; and body movements and by using a potent tool of silence. Psychological evidence of Lynn (1996) seems to confirm that the more changes there are in stimulation and the variation of skills, the more the arousal produced in the learner by affecting the reticular activation system of the brain stem.

Questioning, as a teaching skill, is very crucial to teaching and its importance is inestimable. Both Adams and Biddle (1970) confirmed this and commented on the usefulness of questioning in the teaching and learning processes.

Set induction, as a pedagogical skill, directs the learner's attention to a specific task or learning sequence. If this is developed in a learner, a sense of direction is, thus established by

the learner. There is experimental evidence which demonstrates that differences in set induction affect learning outcomes. The better the set induction, the more likely would the learners be prepared for and receptive of the lesson.

The closure, as a teaching skill, is defined as directing attention to the completion of a specific task or learning sequence. Both Wright and Nuthal (1970) believe that closure is most effective and gains highest in pupils' achievement when a summary of a lesson is used for closure. Both cognitive and social closure could be used and its use needs to be determined well ahead of the lesson. An appropriate use of this teaching skill facilitates confidence in the user.

## **Method**

Primary school teachers connected with the teaching of social studies were studied in Ondo State, Nigeria. In order to select the teachers sample a non-random purpose multi-stage stratified sampling design was used.

*First stage:* Here, Local Education Areas (LEAs) were selected. With care to ensure that the LEAs selected were similar to those not selected, a group of nine was chosen, each including a comparable number of schools: Akoko North East (91 schools), Akoko South West (74 schools), Akure North (101 schools), Akure South (69 schools), Akoko North West (68 schools), Akoko South East (30 schools), Ose (79 schools), Irele (75 schools), Ifedore (107 schools), Ondo West (133 schools), Owo (132 schools), Odigbo (137 schools), Idanre (45 schools), Okitipupa (154 schools), Ilaje (70 schools), Ondo East (46 schools), Ileoluji-Okeigbo (53), and Ese odo (61 schools).

*Second stage:* The large number of schools had to be considered as well as the differences – size between LEAS (for example, Ondo West 133 as compared to Akoko South East with 30 schools). A ratio 1:20 was adopted.

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*Third stage:* within each school, all teachers with five or more years of teaching experience were given questionnaire by their headmasters. This was made up of 344 teachers, 106 male and 238 female.

In order to solicit responses from the teachers, a short questionnaire was constructed by the investigator, mainly to find out which of the skills the teachers knew and the frequency at which they used the skills in the classroom situation. All the 344 teachers completed and returned the questionnaire. Only twenty of the respondents (one from each of the twenty schools) were requested to teach for observation in order to determine the extent to which they practically used the teaching skills in the classroom. They were practically requested to emphasize skills of variation, set induction, planned repetitions and questions (higher order and low order) in a 35-minute lesson.

The researcher and three other experienced judges observed the teaching jointly. The observers agreed that an obvious emphasis of any of the skills for four times during the teaching should carry a score of 5 points in favour of the teacher, while emphasis for three times would carry 2 points. These rules excluded the skill of set induction which was to be emphasized only once during the lesson and a score of 5 points was awarded for it.

At the end of the observation, the total scores which each judge ascribed to each of the teachers were recorded. The scores by the three judges were compared and the average scores for each teacher on each skill was taken and recorded. Thus, each teacher had an average score for each of the skills that he was requested to emphasize.

The data obtained from the respondents were presented in percentages, especially to show the percentage of those teachers who received instruction in the teaching skills when they were in training and those who did not. Also, a five point scale

questionnaire of *very often, often, not certain, not too often* and *never*, were used to obtain data relating to the frequency at which teachers used the teaching skills in the classrooms. The categories were finally regrouped into two often and never. Therefore, the simple percentage expressed the number of teachers, who claimed that they used the skills often and those who said they never used them. Finally, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was administered to test for significant difference between the scores of the teachers on the variables selected for observation.

## **Results**

The primary objectives of this study were first to find out whether the primary school social studies teachers received instructions on the teaching skills of set induction; explanation; probing question'; illustration and use of examples; reinforcement; variation; repetition and closure' while they were in training. Table 8.1 shows the percentages of teachers who received instructions on each skill and those who did not.

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**Table 8.1: % of those teachers who received and did not receive instruction on each skill**

<b>Identification of Teaching Skills</b>	<b>Number who Received Instruction</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number of Did Not Receive Instruction</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Total 344</b>
Set Induction	258	75	86	25	
Explanation	260	75.6	84	24.4	
Probing Question	224	65	120	34.9	
Higher Order Question	150	43.6	194	56.4	
Lower order Question	120	35	224	65	
Illustration	268	78	76	22	
Reinforcement	190	55.2	154	44.8	
Variation	214	62.2	130	37.8	
Repetition	214	36	219	37.8	
Divergent Question	125	36	219	63.7	
Examples	258	75	86	25	
Closure	255	74	89	26	

Table 8.1 reveals that majority of the teachers agreed that they received instruction on all the skills under discussion, except on higher order questions (56.4%), low order question (65%), and divergent question (63.7%) which they claimed were not taught to them. This means that primary school teachers did receive instruction on teaching skills while in training.

**Table 8.2: Self-ascribed frequently of application of skill amongst the teachers**

Teaching Skills	Number of TRS who used often	Percentage	Number of TRS who never used	Percentage	N 344
Set Induction	241	70	103	29.9	
Repetition	76	22	268	78	
Use of example	220	64.9	124	36	
Explanation	265	64.9	124	36	
Variation	134	39	210	61	
Illustration	286	83	612	17	
Probing Question	135	39	209	61	
Higher Order Question	96	27.9	248	72.1	
Lower Order Question	262	76	82	24	
Reinforcement	226	65.7	118	34.3	
Closure	189	55	155	45	
Divergent Question	117	34	227	66	

The frequency of use expressed under ‘often’ on the one hand and ‘never’ on the other hand is expressed in percentage as shown in Table 8.2. This was to determine the self ascribed frequency of the respondent’s use of skills in the classroom situation. Most of the teachers studied claimed that they used skills in their classrooms. However, 78% of the teachers admitted that they never used the repetition, 72.1% never used skill of higher order question, 66% never used the skill of divergent question and 61% never used both probing question and variation.

Finally, the actual application by teachers of four strategic skills - the skills of induction, variation, repetition and higher order question - were observed by three independent judges. The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) analyzed the variance in the four groups of scores.

Table 8.3: ANOVA summary on scores from teacher's application of four teaching skills

Sources of variation	Sum of squares	Means squares	Calculated f-ratio	Tabulated f-ratio	Decision
Between groups	1153.253	384.41	45.65	2.72	REJECT
Within groups	809.2596	8.42			
Total variation	1962.5099				

The calculated one-way ANOVA yielded an F-ratio of 45.65 as against the tabled value of 2.72, DF=3/96. The f-ratio was, thus, significant and the null hypothesis of 'no' differences between the scores of the teachers, as derived from their application of the teaching skills, were rejected.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The effort of carrying out an investigation into the awareness and use of teaching skills among the primary school teachers tends to be worthwhile and important. It must be noted that teaching skills are different from teaching methods on the one hand and it would seem that a great number of teachers cannot distinguish between the two. This distinction is necessary to facilitate effectiveness in classroom teaching. Teaching skills are just ancillary to teaching methods, but without them teaching and learning may be slowed down.

Teaching skills were among the various themes and topics to be learnt by student teachers while in training. The subjects in this study were trained in a wide range of Teacher Training Colleges of the State and it was important to note that they all have heard of the teaching skills mentioned in the study. A significant number of the teachers indicated that they used some of these teaching skills often especially set induction, use of examples,

explanation, illustration, reinforcement and low order question and closure. But, the result of this study revealed that a great number of the teachers (50%) not only said that they did not often use certain skills in teaching, but they were actually seen not to have used these skills in the teaching encounter.

From the situation where half of the subjects in this study did not use teaching skills, such as higher order questions probing and divergent questions, and planned repetition, in their teaching encounter, it is difficult for one to conclude whether there was a deliberate effort to teach student-teachers those skills during their course of training or not. From past experience of the writer in one of the Teacher Training Colleges in the State the teaching of skills were taught and explained to student teachers during some lessons related to the practice of teaching.

### **Recommendation**

Since Grade II Teacher Training Colleges have been phased out in Ondo State, frequent and regular workshops and seminars should be organized to have a programme of teaching skills as a distinct subject. In the Colleges of Education, University Institutes of Education and Faculties of Education, micro-teaching as a subject/programme, should be more rigorously effected in all teaching subjects and a successful completion of a programme of teaching skills should be made a pre-requisite for a student teacher's participation in teaching practice.

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