

# *Effect of Two Learning Strategies on Secondary School Students' Achievement in Social Studies in Kwara State, Nigeria*

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## *Abstract*

*The Study investigated the relative effect of learning for mastery and personalized system of instruction on secondary school students' academic achievement in Social Studies in Kwara State. It also examined the possible effect of interaction on the students' academic achievement. The study adopted the quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test and control group design. A sample of a junior secondary school class II made up of 180 students was used. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the schools and the participants for the study. Two schools were used for the experimental group while the third school served as control group. Data were collected with instrument namely Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT). The test re-test method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and reliability coefficient of 0.84 was obtained. The hypotheses generated were tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA). All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that students exposed to learning for mastery and personalized system of instruction performed better than the control group. It was also revealed that, exposition of students to learning for mastery and personalized system of learning constitute a veritable tool for effective and better performance of students in Social Studies. Based on the findings, it was recommended that appropriate government agencies should organize training seminars and workshop for teachers on new methods of mastery learning for appropriate dissemination of Social Studies Contents.*

***Key words: Mastery, Personalized, Learning of mastery, Performance***

## **Introduction**

Social Studies is a subject that places emphasis on human beings' economic, social and political activities as they relate to the past, the present and the future of people in the society. It is a subject designed to help learners understand the relationship between humans as social beings on the one hand, and between man and his environment on the other hand. Such understanding is aimed at helping the learners to contribute positively to the growth and development of self and the society at large. Social Studies as a subject in schools is a programme of study which the society uses to instill in the students the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions which it considers important concerning the relationships human beings have with each other, their world and themselves (Kissock1981). Edosie (2001:p3) corroborated this when he opined that Social Studies is "an integrated discipline that generate Knowledge, attitude, skills and behaviours which

is necessary to deal with contemporary issues in life of people in the society generally.”

The government, the policy makers and educators seem to understand the value of Social Studies in nation building, which perhaps, explains why the subject has been made compulsory at the primary and junior secondary school (JSS) levels of education. The general assumption is that the knowledge acquired in the subject would transform the young ones to adults who would understand their civic responsibilities to the nation and would be eager to contribute to national development. (Jekayinfa, 2012; Adesina, 2013; and Opoh, Edinyang & Ogbaji, 2014).

Over the years, scholars have noted that the academic achievement of students had remained very poor generally in many subjects in schools. By academic achievement, the researcher is referring to the outcome of education, that is, the extent to which the student, the teacher and policy makers or institutions have achieved their educational goals (Adika & Adika, 2015).

It has been observed that students’ academic performance has remained below the desired standard over the years. The issue of low performance appears to be a global phenomenon as research findings in other countries clearly show poor academic performance, (Adane, 2013; Dimbisso, 2009, Molokumphale & Mhlanli, 2014). On poor academic achievement in Social Studies, scholars have argued that the achievement level in the subject has remained low. Daina (2014) remarked that “the problem of students’ under-achievement in Social Studies have been a much discussed educational issue since the early 80’s when it became a compulsory subject in Nigeria.

Other scholars have attested to this, and have argued that the poor academic achievement is a clear evidence of the fact that Social Studies is not achieving its set goals as a subject in schools, (Adesina, 2013; Opoh, Edinyang & Ogbaji, 2014). Adesina (2013) queried the effectiveness of Social Studies when he said it is however evident that very many problems exist in Nigeria nowadays despite the teaching of Social Studies and other related subjects that work towards solving socio-economic and political problems in the country. He then listed the problems which included human rituals, woman trafficking, cheating and swindling, examination malpractices, occultism and many others. He then concluded that the prevalence of all the vices and immoral behaviour must be due to the schools not having the curriculum subjects like Social Studies and Moral Education that can help build or produce youths with decent minds, who would behave and work like good and decent citizens for the good of the society.

#### Literature Review

In Kwara State, scholars have also attested to the decline in students’ academic achievement in Social Studies. Yusuf (2005) affirmed that students’ performance in Social Studies shows growing decline in Junior Secondary Certificate Examination (JSCE) in Kwara State. Umaru (2010) also reported that academic performance in the subject has declined considerably in the Borgu region of the State. Available official data collated by

the officials of the Kwara State Ministry of Education, Ilorin showed a poor academic achievement in the subject. A recent performance of students in an the West African Senior Certificate Examination (WASSCE) was 15.5%, 25.54%, 13.74%,25.99%,24% and 30.99% in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively, while that of National Examination Council (NECO) was 12%, 11%, 8% and 32% in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively (cf. performance chart : Kwara State Ministry of Education 2014)

Various factors have been identified as causing poor academic performance in Social Studies. Among such factors, as advanced by scholars are poor teaching methods. Different scholars have traced poor academic performance by students to poor teaching methods, (Adunola 2011; Ganyaupfu, 2013; Makaye, 2014, Abdu-Raheem, 2015). For instance, lecture method, which according to Adewuya (2003), is the most commonly used method in Africa including Nigeria, has been described as not effective enough to enhance learning. Abdu-Raheem (2015) reported that scholars have lamented that the teaching method does not stimulate students' innovations, inquiry and scientific method. It encourages students to cram facts that are easily forgotten. The conventional methods do not give opportunity for active participation of students. The teachers remain the only active individuals in the class; he/she controls all activities, during the teaching, asking questions, walking between the chalk-board and the students, (Adewuya, 2003; Adesanya & Adesina, 2014).

Another problem identified by scholars is the lack of qualified and effective teachers. The success or failure of educational goal depends largely on the quality of the teacher. Ewetan and Ewetan (2015) defined a qualified teacher as one that holds a teaching certificate or license as may be prescribed by the relevant education authority, he must possess the knowledge of the subject matter, human growth and development, and in addition he must possess the right attitude and ethical values required for the teaching profession. The researcher observed in the course of the research that lack of qualified and effective teaching is affecting students' academic achievement. In some schools visited, the researcher noted that many schools did not have teachers with teaching qualification in Social Studies. In some schools, teachers whose teaching qualifications are in the area of Government, Religions Studies, English Language, History and International Studies were in charge of the teaching of Social Studies. Shittu and Olanike (2015) made similar observations that non-qualified personnel teach Social Studies in schools. The resultant effect is that students could not perform maximally expectation in the subject.

There are other factors such as instructional materials or teaching aids, gender of the students and socio-economic status of the parents among others as contributing factors to poor performance of students. However, this research focuses on the Mastery Learning Strategies and its effect on the teaching and learning of Social Studies in selected junior secondary schools in Kwara State.

The discussion has so far mentioned that poor methods of teaching Social Studies is one

of the major problems responsible for poor academic achievement. In the course of this research, the researcher observed, that the conventional methods used by teachers reduced the students to inactive learners. The methods such as lecture method and textbook method did not allow for active participation by the learners and did not take into cognisance the individual interest of the learners. Because of this, learners found Social Studies boring and uninteresting. The resultant effect was that students performed below the desired level. This is expected because when students are not properly engaged, when they are rendered inactive in class, the level of alertness is often very low and there is no eagerness to learn, (Martinez & Martinez, 1999; Kaur & Singh, 2013). While lecture method and textbook method are considered not highly productive in terms of academic achievement because they are teacher-centred other methods such as discussion method, demonstration method, play-way method and cooperation method make students active and motivated.

To tackle the problem of poor method of teaching Social Studies, this study explores the strength of Mastery Learning Method (a combination of learning for mastery and personalised system of Instruction) as proposed in Bloom (1964, 1968), Keller (1968) and Guskey (2007) as alternative method of teaching that could probably improve the academic achievement of students in Social Studies. Mastery Learning is an instructional method with a philosophical base that all students can learn well if given the appropriate amount of time with adequate instructional opportunities (Adeyemi ,2007; Wang & Kang, 2012; Sadeghi & Sadeghi, 2012). The learning for mastery aspect of the method stipulates that contents of materials to be learned are divided into relatively small units, each with its own objectives and assessment. The personalized system of instruction aspect on the other hand, as proposed in Keller (1968), advocates that each learner be attended to face to face, on a one-to-one basis. Each learner is allowed to develop at their own pace under the guidance of the teacher and/or proctors, (Kalaivani 2014). Mastery learning is student centred. It takes into account learners' differences and each student is allowed to mature at their own pace. Also, students are allowed to interact as fast learners are given the task of teaching the slow learners. In essence students are made active and are well motivated.

Research findings have shown the effectiveness of Mastery Learning in a number of subjects (Martinez & Martinez, 2001; Kulik, Kulik & Bengert-Drown, 1990). Adeyemi (2007), for instance, concluded that students' achievement in Social Studies improved when they were taught using Mastery Learning method. The scholars investigated the effectiveness of the method among students of the University of Uyo and Osun State College of Education Study Centre. In a similar vein, Fawole (2006) reported that students' academic achievement improved in map work when Mastery Learning method was used in teaching them. His research covered selected schools in Ilesa, Nigeria. Kadir (2003) drew a similar conclusion when he applied the method in teaching mathematics to students in Osun State College of Education, Nigeria. Olubodun (1986), Sadeghi and Sadeghi (2012), Kazu, Kazu and Ozdemir (2005) all affirmed the

effectiveness of Mastery Learning in the teaching of Mathematics, English Language and Basic Information Technology respectively. Following wide report of the effectiveness of Mastery Learning, this study set out to adopt the learning strategy to teach some aspects of Social Studies in some selected schools in the South Senatorial District of Kwara State.

### Statement of the Problem

The statement of the problem arose as a result of an increasing concern among teachers of Social Studies in junior secondary schools that students' achievement in the subject does not meet the desired level in Kwara State. One of the factors that has been identified as causing the low performance is the use of conventional method of teaching. The method is which termed teacher centred is not motivating, and fails to take into cognizance the ability, the orientation and the background of each student or learner. This study was designed to find out the problems of teaching and learning of Social Studies in junior secondary schools in Kwara State and also proffer solution to problems and suggest ways and methods of improving upon the situation of learning and how the findings would benefit the students, society, schools as well as educators.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of Mastery Learning in the context of learning for mastery strategy and personalised system of instruction on the teaching and learning of Social Studies in junior secondary schools.

- ❖ Specifically the study sought to consider contribution of learning for mastery and personalised system of instruction on the academic performance of the students in Social Studies.

### Significance of the Study

This study would help teachers to see the effectiveness of mastery learning strategies on teaching and learning of social studies in our various schools. The studies would also draw the attention of curriculum planners to the advantages of mastery learning strategies and adopt measures for their use by teachers and students in the teaching/learning process.

### Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no statistically significant difference between the pre-test mean scores of students exposed to Mastery Learning strategies and Control Group.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students exposed to mastery learning strategies and control group.

### Research Question

What is the contributions of learning for mastery strategy and personalised system of instruction on the academic performance of students in Social Studies?



## Methodology

The research design for this study was the quasi experimental. The quasi experimental design was considered appropriate because it examined the cause and effect relationship between one variable and the other. It described the relationship that existed between classroom environment and academic performance of students in Social Studies

## Research Design

A pre-test post-test control group quasi-experimental research design was adopted for this study. The design is diagrammatically represented as follows.

Experimental group I	$O_1X_1 O_2$
Experimental group II	$O_3X_2 O_4$
Control Group	$O_5 - O_6$

Where  $O_1, O_3, O_5$  represent the pre-test measurement and  $O_2, O_4, O_6$  represent the post-test measurement.  $X_1$  also represent treatment via personalized system of Instruction  $X_2$  represent treatment via learning for mastery; and control group has no treatment.

## Population and Sample

The population for this study comprised all the junior secondary school II (JSSII) students of Social Studies class, from the 16 Local Government Areas of Kwara State. There were 836 junior secondary schools with a population of 292,000 students in the schools. The sample for the study consisted of 180 students from three schools in three local government area, one each from the three Senatorial Districts in the state. Out of the three schools selected in each Local Government Area two were used as experimental, while the third was used as control. Multistage sampling technique was adopted to select the schools and participants for the study.

Face, content and construct validities were ensured by research experts in social studies, test and measurement and also in Guidance and Counselling. The instrument was affirmed by research experts to be of good quality and, therefore appropriate for the class that the instrument was intended to test.

The test Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT) was later administered on students, and determines reliability, a retest (test-retest) method was carried out on 50 students that were not included in the study four weeks after the initial test. The result of the SSAT and the retest were correlated using Person Product Moment Correlation Analysis, 0.84 level of significance was obtained thereby confirming the reliability of the instrument.

## Instrumentation

The Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT) was instrument used for the study. The face content and construct validities were ensured by experts in Social Studies, Test and Measurement and also in Guidance and Counselling. The Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT) items were administered on students. The reliability of the instrument was

determined through test-retest administered on 50 students that were not included in the main study, after four weeks. The results of the two groups were correlated through Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. A coefficient of 0.84 thereby confirming the reliability of the instrument.

#### Method of Data Analysis

The hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The research question was answered using Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA).

#### Hypotheses

##### Hypothesis 1

*There is no statistically significant difference between the pre-test mean scores of students exposed to mastery leaning method, personalized system of instruction and control group.*

In order to test the hypothesis, pre-test mean school of students exposed to mastery, personalized and control group were computed and subjected. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: ANOVA of pre-test mean scores of students by treatment

Source	SS	Df	MS	Fcal	Ftable	P
Corrected model	6036.336	3	2012.112	61.179	2.68	0.000
Covariate (pretest)	10.269	1	10.269	0.312	3.92	0.577
Group	5981.983	2	2990.992	90.942	3.07	0.000
Error	3815.131	116	32.889			
Corrected Total	9851.467	119				
Total	86258.000					

\*P < 0.05

In Table 2, F-cal 0.312, F-table = 3.92, P=0.577. This means that the null hypothesis is accepted, that is, there was no significant difference among the three groups at the commencement of the study. It implies that the two experimental groups and control group were homogenous at the commencement of the study.

## Hypothesis 2

*There is no significant difference between the post-test mean scores of students exposed to mastery learning, personalized system of instruction and control group.*

In order to test the hypothesis, post-test mean scores of students exposed to mastery, personalized and control group were compared for statistical significance using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: ANOVA of post-test mean scores of students by treatment

Source	SS	Df	MS	Fcal	Ftable	P
Between Groups	6086.067	2	3013.033			
Within Groups	3825.400	117	32.696	92.154*	3.07	0.000
Total	9851.467	119				

$P > 0.05$

Table 3 reveals that Fcal (92.154) is greater than F-table (3.07) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was significant difference among post-test mean scores of students exposed to learning for mastery, personalized system of instruction and control groups. In order to locate the sources of pair-wise significant difference, Scheffe post hoc test was used as depicted in Table 4.

Table 4. Scheffe post hoc test of student post-test mean scores by treatment

Group	Mastery	Personalize d	Control	Mean	N
Mastery			*	31.35	40
Personalized			*	29.05	40
Control				15.30	40

\* Mean difference is significant at 0.05 level



Table 4 shows that there was significant difference in the post test mean scores of students in the mastery learning and control groups at 0.05 level of significance. Similarly, the mean difference between personalized and control groups, was statistically significant at 0.05 level. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the post-test mean scores of mastery and personalized learning groups, this shows statistical significance at 0.05 level.

**Research Question 1:** *What is the contribution of learning for mastery strategy in Social Studies?*

This research question sought to find out the contribution of effectiveness of the two learning strategies. In order to find out the more effective method, multiple classification analysis (MCA) was used to determine the effect of treatment on adjusted mean scores of subjects. The result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) of students' mean scores by treatment.

Variable	N	Unadjusted		Adjusted for Independent	
		Devn <sup>1</sup>	Eta <sup>2</sup>	+ covariate	Bet
Mastery	40	6.12		6.12	
Personalized	40	3.82	.61	3.67	-0.7
Control	40	-9.93		-9.79	
Multiple R					.074
Multiple R <sup>2</sup>					.006

Grand mean = 25.23

Table 5 reveals that students exposed to mastery learning method had the highest adjusted mean score of 31.35 - (25.23= 6.12). This is closely followed by personalized learning; 28.9 - (25.23 = 3.67) while those in the control group had the least adjusted mean score of 15.44 - (25.23 = -9.79). This implied that mastery and personalized learning methods enhanced students' better performance in Social Studies. The treatment accounted for about 61% (Eta<sup>2</sup> = 0.61) of the variance in students' performance in Social Studies.

#### Discussion

The study revealed that, there was a significant difference between the performances of

students before and after the different treatments were administered. The performance of the students was generally low before the treatment was administered. Their mean score was 12.08, 11.15, 12.93 in the pre-test. The level of achievement, however, improved dramatically and significantly in the experimental group with mean scores of 31.35, 29.05 when the control had 15.30 which was very low as compared with the mean scores of the other groups. The improvement in the students' achievement was as a result of the factors that aided learning which were inherent in mastery learning method. The method enhances classroom social interaction, encourages group work, and also gave opportunity for active participation by students during the course of learning. Scholars such as Guskey (2005), Adeyemi (2007), Eyre (2007), Kaliavani (2014) and many others had reported that these factors assisted students in achieving higher academic results in different subjects. Adeyemi (2010) and Masau and Abere (2015) emphasized that several co-ordinate activities such as providing information, instructing and motivating students through innovative activities brought excellent performance in the students' learning outcome.

Again the study also revealed that  $F_{cal} (92.154)$  is greater than the  $F_{table} (3.07)$  at 0.05 of significance, thus the hypothesis was rejected which implies that there was significant difference among the post-test mean scores of the student exposed to learning for mastery, personalized system of instruction and control groups.

The study also revealed a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of learning for mastery, personalized system of instruction and control groups ( $F=90.442, P<0.05$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of learning for mastery, personalized system of instruction and control groups. It was found out that students exposed to learning for mastery methods had the highest adjusted mean score of 31.35 (25.23 + 6.12). The personalized system of instruction group had 28.9 (25.23 + 6.67), when the control group had adjusted mean score of 15.44 (25.23 + 9.79). This implied that learning for mastery and personalized system of instruction strategies enhanced students' better performance in Social Studies. The effectiveness of mastery learning strategy in a number of subjects was testified to by different scholars. Martinez and Martinez (2001), Kazu, Kazu and Ozdemir (2005), and Adeyemi (2007), Wong and Kang (2012), Kaliavani (2014) asserted that students' achievement improved significantly when mastery learning method was used to teach. With particular reference to Social Studies, Adeyemi (2007) affirmed that academic performance improved in Social Studies among 200 level students of University of Uyo, Osun State College of Education, Ila-Orangun Study Centre when they were taught using mastery learning method. The result of the pre-test study is also in agreement with the works of Kaur & Singh (2015), and Egharevba and Osayande (2015) whose works indicated that students who were taught Social Studies using mastery learning strategy had a higher academic achievement than those taught using conventional methods that were teacher-oriented.

The findings in the present study also buttressed the findings of other researchers in

other subjects other than Social Studies that mastery learning strategy led to higher academic achievement among students. One of such researchers was Fawole (2006) who reported that the academic achievement of students who were taught map work in some selected Secondary Schools in Ilesa improved significantly when they were instructed using mastery learning strategy.

### Conclusions

It could be deduced from the study that when social interaction and inter-dependence are encouraged, students would perform better and retain what they learn for a long period of time. It could also be concluded that when each learner is encouraged to have a sense of belonging by participating in the teaching-learning process through the use of both learning for mastery and personalized system of instructional strategies, a better result of achievements will be recorded. Finally, it can be concluded that the two methods: learning for mastery and personalized system of instruction are better methods of teaching Social Studies than the conventional methods.

### Recommendations

1. Learning for mastery and personalized system of instruction should be encouraged by teachers in the teaching of Social Studies. One of the findings in the study showed that students exposed to the two strategies performed better than those not exposed to the strategies. The strategies should therefore be encouraged to improve the academic performance of students.
2. It is also recommended that students should be properly assessed by teachers to determine their level of knowledge when introducing new topics. The pre-test and post-test helped in this study to assess the level of understanding before treatment and the knowledge gained after treatment. Using pre-test and post-test will help teachers and students to know the level of understanding on what has been covered and what should be done in teams of teaching on what remains to be covered.

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