



PLACE-BASED LEARNING STRATEGY AS DETERMINANTS OF JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION AND SOCIAL SKILLS IN SOCIAL STUDIES IN ADO-EKITI

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated Placed-based learning strategy to improve junior secondary school students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in social studies in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study specifically examined the main and interaction effect of treatment of Placed-based learning strategy on the junior secondary school students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in social studies. The study adopted the pretest- posttest, control group, quasi-experimental research design with the experimental group adopting a Placed-based learning strategy and the control group using the conventional approach. Intact classes were used in the study in order not to disrupt the normal class structure. Five research instruments was used for this study which includes; Teachers' Instructional Guide for Placed-based Learning Strategy (TIGPBLs), Teachers' Instructional Guide for Conventional Teaching Strategy (TIGCTS), Social Studies Knowledge Test (SSKT), Students' Social Skills Questionnaire (SSSQ) and Teachers' Assessment Sheet (TAS). Face and content validities of the questionnaire were ensured by experts. The reliability coefficient of 0.81 was established with the help of Cronbach Alpha. The data collected was analysed using Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with the pretest scores as covariates. Based on the findings of the study, conclusion and appropriate recommendations were made.

KEYWORDS: *Placed-based Learning Strategy, Students' Knowledge Acquisition, Social Skills and Social Studies*

INTRODUCTION

Social Studies is an integrated teaching subject that includes important aspects of many different parts of the humanities and Social Sciences. It is important for every person



to have a basic understanding of the key concepts that have molded modern society and these are some of the concerns of Social Studies. The teaching of the subject enables the student to have basic values such as justice and equality, which are the foundation of modern society. The roles of Social Studies education in the development of an individual and the nation are enormous. It is very vital to an all-round development of an individual and has contributed immensely to the attainment of the national objectives of Nigerian education.

Dania & Emubie (2012) submitted that Social Studies is an indispensable veritable tool in achieving national development in Nigeria and any individual exposed to its content would be given a positive orientation that would ultimately prepare them to function effectively in the society. Abubakar (2013) in his own view posited that Social Studies education plays a very crucial role in developing critical and rational thinking ability for practical social life, promoting political literacy and encouraging democratic values and principles for the promotion of functional citizenship. It is evident that Social Studies provides opportunities for students to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge that would enable them to become informed, engaged, active and responsible citizens. However, in order to learn how to be good citizens, it is imperative for students to act as productive citizens. Social Studies education is therefore geared towards moulding learners and citizens who would be able to think critically and rationally for practical social life and also be equipped with the right type of values if taught with the better strategies. One of such strategies is place-based learning strategy.

Place-based learning is one of the learning strategies that employs all aspects of the local environment including local, cultural, historical, and the natural environment as the integrating context for learning. In its most developed forms, place-based learning includes a clear focus on learning through civic engagement and participation in service projects of obvious relevance to the local school and community. According to Sobel (2004), place-based education occurs when children, teachers and adults in the community use the social, cultural, and natural environment in which they live as an inquiry-based learning laboratory for students to gain knowledge and skills across the curriculum. It is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science and other subjects across the curriculum. Furthermore,



Sobel (2004) argued that the emphasis on hands-on real-world learning experiences in place-based learning increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to the community, enhances students' appreciation for the natural world and creates a heightened commitment to serve as active and contributing citizens. Place-based learning strategy create a pedagogy of engagement and help students build a sense of connection to their communities, challenge them to develop a range of intellectual and academic skills in order to understand and take action on the issues they encounter in everyday life. According to Gruenewald & Smith (2008) students' skills of taking active part in their communities increased when exposed to place-based strategies of teaching than when conventional strategies is used. When students engage in learning, they will acquire more knowledge to work harder and achieve their desirable goals. The assets of a community such as its culture and resources can immensely help schools to build active and responsive citizens. Rather than diluting the school curriculum, place-based learning strategy increases the intensity of learning and the likelihood that young people will transfer knowledge and skills to new situations.

Place-based education utilises the local surroundings, human and non-human, as the context for integrating curriculum into a multidisciplinary approach and provides students with opportunities to connect with themselves, their community, and their local environment through hands-on, real world learning experiences. It is rooted in the integrated core curricular activities of science, Social Studies, communication arts and fine arts, and is expanded upon and applied by extending the classroom into the schoolyard and the neighbor hood. This strategy enables students to see that their learning is relevant to their world; take pride in the place in which they live and connect with the rest of the world in a natural way thereby developing into concerned and contributing citizens (Krystle & Lesley, 2014).

More generally, outcomes evident for students involved in place-based education programmes include increased motivation linked to academic performance, enthusiasm, and desire to stay in school (Athman & Monroe, 2004); a feeling of empowerment and responsibility for their own learning (Ernst & Monroe, 2004); the ability to precisely observe, record, and analyze data; and the ability to draw conclusions independent of authority (Lewicki, 2005). In addition, a report from the Sobel (2013) submits that place-based



education fosters students' connection to place and creates vibrant partnerships between schools and communities. Furthermore, it boosts students' achievement and improves environmental, social, and economic vitality. Place-based strategy helps students learn to take care of the world by understanding where they live and taking action in their own backyards and communities. As indicated in the various studies reported, place-based strategy is an effective instructional strategy with numerous benefits. It is student-centred and encourage active engagement of students.

It is in line with this that Can, Lane & Ateşkan (2017) submitted that students are more likely to retain and transfer knowledge when given opportunities to apply what they have learnt to their cultural milieu. As a teaching strategy, place-based learning connects classroom learning objectives with civic engagement. In this mutually beneficial process, students are able to gain a deeper understanding of the course content by integrating theory with practice while community gains access to volunteers and resources (Foster, 2010). The learning goals of place-based learning are focused on academic content and civic engagement. Furthermore, reflection activities are emphasized as a central means of achieving learning goals. In the view of Atelia, *et al* (2006), place-based learning helps students develop the knowledge, skills and attributes of effective citizenship by identifying and acting on issues and concerns that affect their own communities.

Statement of the Problem

Our societies are characterized by increasing rapid social and technological change. Society's ability to orchestrate change frequently outstrips its ability to reflect on the ramification of what it has done. When they leave the classroom, many of the students, do not return immediately to the family setting but interact with others from a variety of backgrounds. The students spend more hours watching television than they spend in any other activity besides sleeping and as they sit passively watching, they are bombarded by messages. They therefore, learn information about cultism, drug abuse, corruption and other immoral activities which does not in any form make them fit into a larger framework as an active positive citizen of Ekiti State.

The students ability to evaluate positive messages are not felt in their social skills based on the frequent occurrence of incessant involvement in criminal activities between



the ages of eleven and twenty years which are secondary school students in Ekiti State. One cannot sit passively as they are manipulated if we expect them to become active, responsible citizens who are expected to maintain the democratic values upon which this nation should be. The use of conventional strategies of teaching Social Studies which is characterized by more regurgitation of facts that has been the norms in many schools and have failed to make significant improvement in students' engagement, acquisition of knowledge, social skills and other desired outcomes would definitely not be appropriate. There is therefore an urgent need to look for effective instructional strategies to teach Social Studies concepts, which should be innovative and learner-based in order to combat the high anti-social behaviours of the students and enhance their pursuit of becoming an active citizen in their various communities. This informed the reason this researcher sought to determine the usage of place-based learning strategy on Junior Secondary School Student achievements in Social Studies in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the level of effect of placed-based learning strategy on the junior secondary school students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in social studies in Ado-Ekiti?
2. Is there any significant interaction effect of treatment and academic ability on students' knowledge of social issues concepts in Social Studies?
3. Is there any significant interaction effect of treatment and academic ability on students' social skills in social issues concepts in Social Studies?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant effect of placed-based learning strategy on the junior secondary school students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in Social Studies.
2. There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and academic ability on students' knowledge of social issues concepts in Social Studies.
3. There is no significant effect of treatment and academic ability on students' social skills in social issues concepts in Social Studies.



REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Learning Strategies

Schumaker & Deshler (2006) define a learning strategy as “an individual’s approach to a task. It includes how a person thinks and acts when planning, executing, and evaluating performance on a task and its outcomes.” Much of this thinking about learning is done unconsciously. For example, most of us automatically slow down when reading content that is difficult for us to understand. We also make use of a variety of strategies for helping us organize and remember—both key elements of the learning process.

As with many characteristics about people, however, there is wide variation in terms of the number of learning strategies we know and how well we use them. For example, think of a student you have known who approached new types of tasks with enthusiasm and who was typically able to “figure out” how to apply what he or she already knew to tackling a new problem. Now think about another child who reads a textbook but, when asked to summarize the main points in the chapter, can present only a disjointed list of thoughts with little sense of how they fit together. In math, this child might use only one strategy when approaching a problem—even when that method repeatedly fails.

Oftentimes, the difference between these two children is neither cognitive ability nor content knowledge. Instead, the second child lacks metacognitive skills. Activities such as planning, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating progress toward completion of a learning task are metacognitive in nature.

Students with better-developed metacognitive skills typically have a better sense of their own strengths and needs related to the learning process. They have a larger repertoire of learning strategies—again, many of them used almost unconsciously. And perhaps most importantly, they are likely to select and use the learning strategy that is most effective in helping them address a particular learning task.

Researchers such as Wang, Haertel & Walberg (1993/1994) can help us understand just how important such metacognitive skills are to student learning. They created a knowledge base of 11,000 statistical findings from a wide range of studies on student learning. Their intent was to identify the relative strength of the contribution of several major factors. They found that “student aptitude was the most influential of the six broad



types of influences. Among the categories of student aptitude, a student's metacognitive processes—that is, a student's capacity to plan, monitor, and, if necessary, re-plan learning strategies— had the most powerful effect on his or her learning.”

An increasingly strong research base points to the potential of strategy instruction to help support struggling learners, including students with learning disabilities. Specifically, teaching students how to use learning strategies, and helping them choose and implement them effectively, helps to strengthen their metacognitive abilities—and this, in turn, connects to improved student learning. Good strategy instruction also can help. For example:

- Improve student performance, especially of students who have not previously developed effective metacognitive skills;
- Increase student independence and engagement with learning; and
- Help students realize that it is sometimes the use of ineffective strategies—not lack of ability—that hinders performance.

This last factor is especially important because it may help to increase motivation. Students who have repeatedly experienced failure in school due to a lack of “tools” that can help them approach learning efficiently are likely to become less persistent in addressing school tasks. Acquiring some additional tools—learning strategies—increases their likelihood of success, and may also increase their willingness to take on new challenges.

Place-based Learning Strategy

Place-based learning involves the development of a bond between a person and a place (Kudryavtsev, Stedman & Krasny 2012). In addition to everyday experiences, out-of-school educational programs, well-planned field trips, and short outings combined with inquiry-based activities can be used to develop these bonds. According to the twenty five year old education research organization, The Buck Institute, it is “a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge.” It all starts with a problem—a real problem like saving ocean species, global warming or the dangers of using plastic bags. As students get into exploring the depth of the problem and identifying possible solutions, they research the problem, interview experts,



and present results in concise, highly readable and visual forms demonstrating their abilities to communicate. They are engaged, learning skills, gaining the knowledge and expertise the workforce is looking for. It totally changes how they learn and the teachers teach. As Ben Johnson, a career educator, put it for the educational website Edutopia: "Great teachers do not teach. They stack the deck so that students have a reason to learn and in the process can't help but learn mainly by teaching themselves. This knowledge then becomes permanent and cherished rather than illusory and irrelevant."

Place-based learning is one of the community based learning strategies that employs all aspects of the local environment including local, cultural, historical, and the natural environment as the integrating context for learning. In its most developed forms, place-based learning includes a clear focus on learning through civic engagement and participation in service projects of obvious relevance to the local school and community. According to Sobel (2004), place-based education occurs when children, teachers and adults in the community use the social, cultural, and natural environment in which they live as an inquiry-based learning laboratory for students to gain knowledge and skills across the curriculum. It is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science and other subjects across the curriculum.

Furthermore, Sobel (2004) argued that the emphasis on hands-on real-world learning experiences in place-based learning increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to the community, enhances students' appreciation for the natural world and creates a heightened commitment to serve as active and contributing citizens. Community vitality and environmental quality are improved through the active engagement of local citizens, community organizations and environmental resources in the life of the school.

Benefits of Place Based Education

According to Fly (2010), the overall benefits of place-based education as a teaching strategy include:

- i. Place-based education fosters students' connection to place and creates vibrant partnerships between schools and communities.



- ii. It boosts student achievement and improves environmental, social, and economic vitality.
- iii. Place-based education helps students learn to take care of the world by understanding where they live and taking action in their own backyards and communities.
- iv. Place-based programmes energize teachers, build their confidence and allow them develop their leadership skills
- v. Place-based education transforms school culture, reinvigorate teachers and promote job satisfaction.
- vi. It helps students learn by developing greater knowledge of nature and acquisition of life-long learning experiences.
- vii. Encourages students to become environmental stewards.
- viii. It tends to incorporate many best practices in education such as teaching to multiple intelligences, brain-based learning, collaborative learning, differentiated instruction, etc.
- ix. Place-based education enables students to see that learning are relevant to their world, take pride in where they live, connect with the rest of the world, and develop into concerned and contributing citizens.
- x. The time spent outdoors and in the community leads to increased physical activity leading to improved physical health and better social interaction skills.
- xi. It enhance growth in community social capital through the involvement and investment of the community in schools which consequently increase the civic pride and engagement of students.

METHODOLOGY

The pretest- posttest, control group, quasi-experimental research design was adopted for this paper with the experimental group adopting a placed-based strategy and the control group using the conventional approach. Intact classes were used in the study in order not to disrupt the normal class structure. This design is represented thus: using 3x2x2 factorial matrix.

O₁X₁O₂ (pretest, treatment and posttest for experimental Group I)



$O_3X_3 O_4$ (pretest, conventional strategy and post-test for control group)

The symbols signifies

$O_1 O_3$ -pretests

O_2, O_4 -posttests

X_1 – Experimental treatment

X_3 – conventional strategy for the control group.

The design lay out is shown in table 3.1

Table 3.1: 3 x 2 x 2 Factorial Design

Treatment	Location	Academic Ability		
		High	Medium	Low
Place-based Strategy	Urban			
	Rural			
Conventional Strategy	Urban			
	Rural			

The 3x2x2 factorial matrix will be chosen in order to ensure proper matching of variables involved in the study. This will allow separate determination of the main effects of the treatment as well as the patterns of interaction effects of place-based learning strategy on Junior Secondary School Student achievements in Social Studies in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State Nigeria. The study would cover all the Junior Secondary Schools two (JS II) in Ado Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Ado Ekiti is stratified into urban and rural settlements of which three schools will be purposively selected from each of the urban and rural settlements. The schools will be randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. Five research instruments was used for this study which includes; Teachers' Instructional Guide for Place-Based Learning Strategy (TIGPBLs), Teachers' Instructional Guide for Conventional Teaching Strategy (TIGCTS), Social Studies Knowledge Test (SSKT), Students' Social Skills Questionnaire (SSSQ) and Teachers' Assessment Sheet (TAS). Face and content validities of the questionnaires were ensured by experts. The reliability coefficient of 0.81 was established with the help of Cronbach Alpha. The data collected was analysed using Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with the pretest scores as covariates. Where there are



significant main effects, Estimated Marginal Means was used to determine the magnitude of the differences. Scheffe Post hoc test was also used to determine the source of such significant differences. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Question 1: What is the level of effect of placed-based learning strategy on the junior secondary school students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in social studies in Ado-Ekiti?

In order to determine the level of effect of placed-based learning strategy on the junior secondary school students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in social studies, mean values of responses towards placed-based learning strategy were used. Mean values were used to illustrate the responses to items 1-30 in Section B of the questionnaire on social study skills (low, moderate and high).

Respondents who scored below the mean score (2.50) were categorized into low level of effect. Those who scored above the mean score were categorized into high level effect while those who scored around the mean score were grouped as moderate level of effect. The level of effect of placed-based learning strategy on the junior secondary school students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in social studies is presented in table 1

Table 1: Level of effect of placed-based learning strategy on students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in social studies

Levels of effect of Placed-based learning strategy	Before Treatment		After Treatment	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Low (1.00 – 2.49)	108	78.3%	3	2.2%
Moderate (2.50 – 2.99)	25	18.1%	34	24.6%
High (3.00 – 4.00)	5	3.6%	101	73.2%
Total	138	100%	138	100%

Table 1 presents the level of effect of placed-based learning strategy on the junior secondary school students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in social studies. The result showed that before treatment, out of 138 respondents, 108 (78.3%) had low



knowledge acquisition and social skills, 25 (18.1%) had moderate knowledge acquisition and social skills while those with high knowledge acquisition and social skills were 5 (3.6%). This shows that the level of students' knowledge acquisition and social skills before the introduction of placed-based learning strategy was low. However after the introduction of placed-based learning strategy, out of 138 respondents in an intact class, 3 (2.2%) had low knowledge acquisition and social skills, 34 (24.6%) had moderate knowledge acquisition and social skills while those with high level of knowledge acquisition and social skills were 101 (73.2%). This showed that the effect of placed-based learning strategy on the junior secondary school students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in social studies was high.

Question 2: Is there any significant interaction effect of treatment and academic ability on students' knowledge of social issues concepts in Social Studies?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of post-test scores of students' academic ability on knowledge of social issue

Groups	Test	Number	Mean (\bar{X})	Standard Deviation	Mean Differences
Place-based learning strategy	Post- test	54	49.90	7.76	5.03
Academic ability on students' knowledge	Post- test	54	44.87	5.03	
Total		108			

Source: Field Survey, 2020

The result presented in table 2 showed that the mean difference of students' under treatment (placed-based learning) and academic ability on students' knowledge is 5.03. This implies that students' academic ability on knowledge of social issue improved more appreciably when students are being taught by place-based learning strategy. Hence, there is interaction effect of treatment and academic ability on students' knowledge of social issues concepts in Social Studies.



Question 3: Is there any significant interaction effect of treatment and academic ability on students' social skills in social issues concepts in Social Studies?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of post-test scores of students' academic ability on social skills of social issue

Groups	Test	Number	Mean (\bar{X})	Standard Deviation	Mean Differences
Place-based learning strategy	Post- test	54	49.90	7.76	7.70
Academic ability on students' social skills in social issues	Post- test	54	42.20	6.46	
Total		108			

Source: Field Survey, 2020

The result presented in table 3 showed that the mean difference of students' under treatment (placed-based learning) and academic ability on students' social skills is 7.70. This implies that students' academic ability on social skills of social issue improved more appreciably when students are being taught by place-based learning strategy. Hence, there is interaction effect of treatment and academic ability on students' social skills of social issues concepts in Social Studies.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant effect of placed-based learning strategy on the junior secondary school students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in Social Studies.



Table 4: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of effect of placed-based learning strategy on the junior secondary school students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in Social Studies

Source of variation	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (P)
Corrected Model	5.843	3	7.484	8.537	.000
Covariate	8.447	1	5.447	5.878	.000
Treatment*Knowledge acquisition	1.537	1	5.884	5.798	.000
Treatment*Socia skills	3.168	1	6.389	6.296	.000
Error	5.007	129	.109		
Total	21.000	133			
Corrected Total	9.850	131			

R Squared = .654 (Adjusted R Squared = .540) *p < 0.05

The result in Table 4 showed that p-value (0.000) was less than 0.05 level of significance for treatment and knowledge acquisition and also, p-value (0.000) was less than 0.05 level of significance for treatment and social skills. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is a significant effect of placed-based learning strategy on the junior secondary school students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in Social Studies.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and academic ability on students' knowledge of social issues concepts in Social Studies.



Table 5: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of effect of placed-based learning strategy on students' knowledge acquisition of social issues in Social Studies

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (P)
Corrected Model	3.819 ^a	1	3.819	2.219	.041
Covariate	5.809	1	7.819	8.755	.000
Treatment*Knowledge acquisition	3.854	1	3.819	7.219	.041
Error	2.283	131	17.474		
Total	14.000	133			
Corrected Total	16.102	132			

R Squared = .725 (Adjusted R Squared = .720) *p < 0.05

The result in Table 5 showed that p-value (0.041) is less than 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is a significant effect of placed-based learning strategy on the junior secondary school students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in Social Studies.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant effect of treatment and academic ability on students' social skills in social issues concepts in Social Studies.

Table 6: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of effect of placed-based learning strategy on students' social skills of social issues in Social Studies

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (P)
Corrected Model	233.819 ^a	1	3.819	20.219	.041
Covariate	153647.819	1	153647.819	8792.755	.000
Treatment*social skills	313.819	1	3.819	23.229	.000
Error	1852.283	131	17.474		
Total	156065.000	133			
Corrected Total	1856.102	132			

R Squared = .885 (Adjusted R Squared = .8830) *p < 0.05



The results in Table 6 showed that p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is a significant effect of treatment and academic ability on students' social skills in social issues concepts in Social Studies.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the finding of the study, this study concluded that place-based learning strategy is highly instrumental to improving junior secondary school students' knowledge acquisition and social skills in Social Studies in Ado Ekiti. Place-based learning strategy stands to be a strong determinant of academic ability of students on knowledge acquisition and social skills on social issues in Ado Ekiti.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study made the following recommendations:

1. Social studies teachers should be encouraged to embrace the use of place-based learning strategy in the process teaching to enhance effectiveness and improve students' academic ability in social studies
2. The school authorities should constantly make provision for facilities that will enhance the use of place-based learning strategy during classroom teaching.

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