

**TEACHERS' MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF
SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENTS IN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH
AFRICA.**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated teachers' motivational strategies and academic performance of Social Studies students in Junior secondary schools in South Africa. The population of this study consisted of stake holders, principals, vice principals, teachers and students in South Africa. The study adopted Ex-post facto research design while simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents. Data was obtained using an instrument for data collection tagged "Teachers Motivational Strategies Questionnaire, (TMSQ)". Data obtained from respondents was analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) while Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha levels. It was observed that there is significant relationship between teachers' offer of incentives to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa. It was also observed that there is significant relationship between teachers' provision of timely feedback to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa. Among other recommendations it was recommended that teachers should always encourage their student by way of introducing motivating factors such as awards and gifts to the best performing student in the class.

INTRODUCTION

Social Studies is used to describe an integrated approach to teaching elements of such disciplines as Anthropology, Sociology, History, Geography, Economics, Civics and Psychology. In one way or the other Social Studies takes care of every one of these subjects in various ramifications. According to experts, Social Studies as a course was meant to inculcate in the students the spirit of service to the fatherland, unity, dignity in labour, among other things. Social studies also takes into consideration the five main national goals, which have been endorsed as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education. The goals include:

- (a) A free and democratic society;
- (b) A just and egalitarian society;
- (c) A united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- (d) A great and dynamic economy;
- (e) A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (FGN, 2004).

The Government of some nations listed Social Studies and citizenship Education as core subjects. An understanding of Social Studies is important to prepare students to be active, productive, and participatory citizens.

Anderson (2000) described Social Studies as a study of how man influences and is in turn influenced by his physical, social, political, religious, economic, psychological, cultural, scientific and technological environment. Education is a fundamental human right (Aire and Tella, in Yinka, 2003). It is a key to sustainable development, peace and stability within and among countries. Students' achievement of educational goals is very important in all -societies of the world today. Teachers have the biggest impact on the success of students' academic performance as the motivational strategies they employ will be instrumental in helping the students learn studiously and one approach is likely to produce different results than the other. Students' willingness and readiness to undertake a task may depend on the rewards they expect from the teachers. This motivation may be caused by either extrinsic or intrinsic stimuli, both of which are important in directing and regulating the learner's behaviour towards attainment of the desired goals.

The learning environment and teachers' motivation relatively need attention in the field of social studies teaching and learning. Gesinde (2000) asserted that the activities in the classroom, the repeated actions in which students and teachers engage as they learn are important because they constitute the knowledge that is produced. Availability of teaching/learning resources and teachers' motivation enhances the effectiveness of schools as these are basic things that can bring about good academic performance in the students. Motivational strategies adopted by social studies teachers have immense contribution to the academic performance of students. According to Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003), motivational strategies include teachers' offer of incentives to students, teachers' provision of timely feedback to students, teachers' use of praise and teachers adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching students. Others include encouraging students by getting them involved, bringing creativity in the subject and drawing connections to real life when teaching.

ICT plays a very important role in motivating students towards higher academic performance. This agrees with Delvecchio and Loughney (2006) who in their opinion stated that the application of ICT in teaching makes learning easier and interesting to the students and helps them to perform well in assignment, test and examinations. Lopes (2003) considered ICT facilities as very useful tool that motivate students for stress-free learning and higher academic performance. According to Bynum (2011), incentive plays a very important role in the life of every student. Citing an example, the author maintained that a child that enjoys good incentive from the parents is bound not to abuse and therefore will do everything to please them, therefore noted that this same effect goes to the case of classroom incentives given by the teachers. He added that giving learning incentives to students goes a long way in motivating them for higher performance.

Statement of the Problem

Many teachers struggle with motivating students to learn. This is especially prevalent in social studies classroom in which students perceive social studies as boring. This has impacted negatively on student's performance in Social Studies. Content literacy, specifically in social studies is a problem that affects students in Junior Secondary schools. Content literacy is the ability to use reading and writing for the acquisition of new content in a given discipline (McPherson, 2007).

Teachers are faced with a multitude of choices as to what are the most effective teaching strategies to enhance student learning in social studies.

In response to higher expectations and a perceived lack of result, researchers and teachers have been seeking a right kind of balance of teaching strategies for years. Thus, the problem of this study is to examine teachers' motivational strategies and academic performance of Social Studies students.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine teachers' motivational strategies and academic performance of Social Studies students in Junior secondary schools in South Africa. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the relationship between teachers' offer of incentives to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa.
2. To find out the relationship between teachers' provision of timely feedback to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa.

Research Questions

The research questions stated for the study are:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' offer of incentives to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa?
2. How does a teacher's provision of timely feedback to students relate to their academic performance in social studies in South Africa?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are raised for the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between teachers' offer of incentives to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa.
2. There is no significant relationship between teachers' provision of timely feedback to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa.

Literature Review

Incentives and students academic performance

Incentives provided to teachers have helped improve students academic outcomes. Few studies have been conducted to examine the effect of incentives provided directly to students, based on their performance. According to Holmstrom and Milgrom (1991), one potential method to increase student achievement and improve the quality of individuals selecting teaching as a profession is to provide teachers with financial incentives based on student achievement. Theoretically, teacher incentives could have one of three effects. If teachers lack motivation or incentive to put effort into important inputs to the education production function (e.g. lesson planning, parental engagement), financial incentives for student achievement may have a positive impact by motivating teachers to increase their effort. However, if teachers do not know how to increase student achievement, the production function has important complementarities outside their control, or the incentives are either confusing or too weak, teacher incentives may have no impact on achievement.

Conversely, if teacher incentives have unintended consequences such as explicit cheating, teaching to the test, or focusing on specific, tested objectives at the expense of more general

learning, teacher incentives could have a negative impact on student performance (Jacob & Levitt, 2003). Similarly, some argue that teacher incentives can decrease a teacher's intrinsic motivation or lead to harmful competition between teachers in what some believe to be a collaborative environment (Johnson, 1984; Firestone & Pennell, 1993). A bonus payment to teachers can improve student academic performance but only when it is given upfront, on the condition that part of the money must be returned if student performance fails to improve (Fryer & Roland, 2010).

Setting expectations and making reasonable demands encourages students to participate, but sometimes students need an extra push in the right direction. Offering students small incentives makes learning fun and motivates students to push themselves. Incentives can range from small to large giving of special privilege to an exemplary student, to a class pizza party if the average test score rises. Rewards give students a sense of accomplishment and encourage them to work with a goal in mind. Bynum (2011) asserted that there is no other form of motivation that works quite as well as encouragement. Even as adults we crave recognition and praise, and students at any age are no exception. Teachers can give students a bounty of motivation by rewarding success publicly, giving praise for a job well done, and sharing exemplary work.

Teachers' provision of timely feedback to Student and academic performance

Students want to be recognized for the hard work and effort they put into their classes. The study of Ungerleider (2002) maintained that many view grades as a primary incentive for their scholastic efforts. The author asserted that by returning assignments quickly and by constructively communicating positive and negative feedback, the teacher is able to acknowledge the students' hard work while still encouraging them to strive for more. If students do not receive feedback on their work, it is often difficult for them to know whether or not they are fully meeting expectations and learning the material. In addition, if the teacher neglects to explain why something was wrong or point the student in the right direction by further articulating expectations, the student may not make any additional effort to succeed as he/she does not know what direction to take. Since the teacher's ultimate goal is for students to learn the course material, consider underscoring or deemphasizing the grade earned by prioritizing and shifting the focus from the grade to the detailed comments and feedback provided on their work.

Sandra (2002) maintained that students who struggle with class work can sometimes feel frustrated and get down on themselves, draining motivation. In these situations it is critical that teachers help students to learn exactly where they went wrong and how they can improve next time. Figuring out a method to get where students want to be can also help them to stay motivated to work hard. Effective teaching not only involves imparting information and understandings to students (or providing constructive tasks, environments, and learning) but also involves assessing and evaluating students' understanding of this information, so that the next teaching act can be matched to the present understanding of the students.

Winne and Butler (1994) provided an excellent summary in their claim that "feedback is information with which a learner can confirm, add to, overwrite, tune, or restructure information in memory, whether that information is domain knowledge, meta-cognitive knowledge, beliefs about self and tasks, or cognitive tactics and strategies". Objective feedback in the form of assessment data also offers an invaluable tool for supervision. As Howard and McColskey (2001) noted, "evaluation

that leads to professional growth requires teachers to look honestly at their weaknesses and strengths”. Self-assessment can be limited because of a lack of objectivity. Feedback from colleagues or supervisors based on a few classroom visits is equally limited because of the narrow sampling of behaviour it provides.

METHOD

Research design

This study adopted an Expost-Facto research design. This design was considered appropriate for the research as it attempted to check the already existing influence of the independent variable (teachers’ motivational strategies) on the dependent variable (student performance in social studies).

Area of the Study

The area of study is South Africa.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of stake holders, principals, vice principals, teachers and students in South Africa. (40 students were randomly selected from 6 schools each.)

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for this study consisted of 240 respondents. They were obtained through simple random sampling technique.

Instrumentation

The first instrument used by the researcher for this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire tagged “Teachers Motivational Strategies, (TMSQ)” was used to collect data on the independent variables presented in both sections A and B of the questionnaire.

Validation of the Research Instrument

The face validation of the research instrument was made by the researcher’s supervisor and an expert in Tests and Measurement.

Reliability of the Instrument

In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, test-retest reliability analysis was carried out on the research instrument, using 30 people who did not form part of the main work. From the analysis, the following reliability coefficient (0.85) was obtained. The value was considered substantially high enough to justify the use of the instrument.

Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Corelation analysis to test the hypotheses. The calculated values were compared with the critical values for test of significance of the result at 0.05 alpha level,

Data Analyses and Results

Research Question One

The research question sought to find out the relationship between teachers’ offer of incentives to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa. In order to answer the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data collected as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the relationship between teachers’ offer of incentives to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa

| Variable | N | Arithmetic mean | Expected Mean | r | Remarks |
|----------|---|-----------------|---------------|---|---------|
|----------|---|-----------------|---------------|---|---------|

| | | | |
|--|-------|------|---------------------------------------|
| Teachers' offer incentive to students | 13.44 | 12.5 | |
| | 240 | | 0.69* |
| | | | *Moderately strong relationship |
| Academic performance | 64.06 | 50 | |

Table 1 presents the result of the descriptive statistics of the relationship between teachers' offer of incentives to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa. The two variables were observed to have moderately strong relationship at 69 percent. The arithmetic mean for teachers' offer of incentives to students 13.44 was observed to be greater than the expected mean score of 12.5. In addition to that, the arithmetic mean as regards academic performance in social studies 64.06 was observed to be higher than the expected mean score of 50. The result therefore means that there is remarkable relationship between teachers' offer of incentives to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa.

Research Question Two

The research question sought to find out the relationship between teacher's provision of timely feedback to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa. In order to answer the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data collected as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of the relationship between teacher’s provision of timely feedback to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa

| Variable | N | Arithmetic mean | Expected mean | r | Remarks |
|--|-----|-----------------|---------------|-------|---------------------------------|
| Teacher’s provision of timely feedback to students | 240 | 14.44 | 12.5 | 0.89* | *Strong to perfect relationship |
| Students Academic performance | | 64.06 | 50 | | |

Table 2 presents the result of the descriptive statistics of the relationship between teacher’s provision of timely feedback to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa. The two variables were observed to have strong to perfect relationship at 89 percent. The arithmetic mean for teacher’s provision of timely feedback to students 14.44 was observed to be greater than the expected mean score of 12.5. In addition to that, the arithmetic mean as regards students academic performance in social studies 64.06 was observed to be higher than the expected mean score of 50. The result therefore means that there is remarkable relationship between teacher’s provision of timely feedback to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between teachers’ offer of incentives to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa. In order to test the hypothesis, two variables were identified as follows:-

1. Teacher’s offer of incentives to student as the independent variable
2. Academic performance as the dependent variable

Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was then used to analyze the data in order to determine the relationship between the two variables (see Table 3)

Table 3

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between teachers’ offer of incentives to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa.

| Variable | $\sum x$ | $\sum x^2$ | $\sum xy$ | r_{cal} | r_{crit} |
|-----------------------------------|----------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Teacher’s offer of incentives (x) | 3225 | 44115 | | | |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------|---------|-------|
| | 210165 | 0.69* | 0.139 |
| Academic performance (y) | 153755 | 1018905 | |

***Significant at 0.05 level; df =238; N =240; critical r-value = 0.139**

Table 3 presents the obtained r-value as (0.64). This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical r-value (0.139) at 0.05 level with 238 degree of freedom. The obtained r-value (0.69) was greater than the critical r-value (0.139). Hence, the result was significant. The result therefore means that there is significant relationship between teachers’ offer of incentives to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between teachers’ provision of timely feedback to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa. In order to test the hypothesis, two variables were identified as follows:-

1. Teachers’ provision of timely feedback to student as the independent variable
2. Academic performance as the dependent variable

Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was then used to analyze the data in order to determine the relationship between the two variables (see Table 4)

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between teachers’ provision of timely feedback to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa

| Variable | $\sum x$ | $\sum x^2$ | $\sum xy$ | r_{cal} | r_{crit} |
|--|----------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | $\sum y$ | $\sum y^2$ | | | |
| Teachers’ provision of timely feedback | 3465 | 5098 | | | |
| | | | 227040 | 0.89* | 0.139 |
| Academic performance (y) | 15375 | 1018905 | | | |

***Significant at 0.05 level; df =238; N =240; critical r-value = 0.139**

Table 4 presents the obtained r-value as (0.89). This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical r-value (0.139) at 0.05 level with 238 degree of freedom. The obtained r-value (0.89) was greater than the critical r-value (0.139). Hence, the result was significant. The result therefore means that there is significant relationship between teachers’ provision of timely feedback to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the data analysis in Table 3 was significant due to the fact that the obtained r-value (0.69) was greater than the critical r-value (0.139) at 0.05 level with 238 degree of freedom.

This result implies that there is significant relationship between teachers' offer of incentives to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa. The result is in agreement with the research findings Holmstrom and Milgrom (1991), who stated that one potential method to increase student achievement and improve the quality of individuals selecting teaching as a profession is to provide teachers with financial incentives based on student achievement. The result of the analysis caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative one was retained.

The result of the data analysis in Table 4 was significant due to the fact that the obtained r-value (0.89) was greater than the critical r-value (0.139) at 0.05 level with 238 degree of freedom. This result therefore means there is significant relationship between teachers' provision of timely feedback to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa. The result is in agreement with the research findings Winne and Butler (1994), who provided an excellent summary in their claim that "feedback is information with which a learner can confirm, add to, overwrite, tune, or restructure information in memory, whether that information is domain knowledge, meta-cognitive knowledge, beliefs about self and tasks, or cognitive tactics and strategies". The result of the analysis caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative one was retained.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the research work, it is concluded that there is significant relationship between teachers' offer of incentives to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa. There is significant relationship between teachers' provision of timely feedback to students and their academic performance in social studies in South Africa.

Recommendations

1. Teachers should always encourage their student by way of introducing motivating factors such as awards and gifts to the best performing student in the class.
2. Best performing students in the class should always be encouraged by others by way of being appreciated with an applause when ever the attempt an answer to a question.

3. Teachers should always get their student involved in things that will cause them to need their help such as class work, home work, competitive class work etc.

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