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# AN ASSESSMENT OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND TEACHERS' INFLUENCE ON RATE OF ENROLMENT IN GEOGRAPHY IN SELECTED SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ATIBA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OYO STATE

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## **Abstract**

*The number of students studying Geography in Nigeria in the senior secondary schools has declined significantly in recent times. It is on this note that this study assessed the students' perceptions of the subject and teachers' influence as it affects rate of enrolment in the subject in eight selected senior secondary schools in Atiba Local Government area of Oyo State. The study population is senior secondary students and the subject teacher in the study area. The sample population was twenty-five students which were randomly selected from each of the selected schools as participants. One geography teacher was also selected from each school as participants. Questionnaires were used to collect the data. Frequency tables and percentages were used to present the data collected. Descriptive method of data analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that majority of the students (74%) do not have better understanding of geography as a subject and this influenced their low preference for the subject while (81.5%) considered geography to be uninteresting and boring. Of the total number of students interviewed, (75%) were not aware of careers opportunities in geography and (71%) of them considered the subject as irrelevant to their future courses and intending future job. The findings also revealed that students prefer some other subjects which are more easier and more interesting to study. On the part of the teachers, the study revealed that lack and insufficient teaching aids, absence of in-service training, absence of outdoor activities/excursions and lack of geographical garden hindered them from putting their best while teaching the subject. However, the recommendations put forward include improvement in teacher-students interaction, making the class more interesting by the teachers, making geography compulsory at primary and secondary schools level, making use of instructional materials while teaching, among others.*

**Key words:** *Geography, development, careers, opportunities.*

## INTRODUCTION

In spite of the importance of geography which serves as the present day hope in predicting and proffering solutions to our ever increasing environmental problems, ranging from climate change, ozone layer depletion, global warming, flooding, soil erosion, mass movement, drought and desertification, pollutions and earthquakes in other places, the learning of Geography and the enrolment of students in the subject are declining fast in Nigeria. Akintade (2012) noted that, Geography as a school subject is one of the most important subjects in secondary school education. Geography is relevant for both the students who are likely to continue to tertiary level and those who will not proceed. It equips students with a body of knowledge to make them functional and socially relevant in the fast changing world. No doubt, geography is a distinct and dynamic social science discipline that deals with the study of man and his physical environment (Aboh, 2013). It therefore helps young people to appreciate the value of their environment and its vast natural resources. That Geography as a subject is versatile, expressive and intellectually stimulating. It exhibits a correlation with all school subjects. It instils in the student the need to appreciate and develop a sense of responsibility towards their own society. Despite this, there is an observable lack of students' interest in Geography as a school subject in most of the senior secondary schools in Atiba Local Government Area of Oyo State in particular and entire Nigeria in general. This lack of senior secondary school students' interest in the subject has really affected the number of students offering it in the institution of higher learning in Nigeria, this situation according to Aboh (2012) agreed with Akintade (2012) who observed, there has been sharp decline in the number of student that offer Geography at the senior secondary school level in Ilorin, kwara state

According to Okpala (2000), any subject that is not termed essential at any educational level in any educational system has to work extra mile for its continued existence. Such a subject may be phased out if it lacks clientele (students). It could also be relegated to the background if an allied subject is thought to be more relevant to the citizens at that point in time. Geography is facing this threat. The former is been in Nigeria, most especially in private senior secondary schools when the number of Geography students fall below expected number, the next thing is to remove geography from the time-table for economic reasons. This phenomenon is also been experienced in private higher institutions in Nigeria especially colleges of education and universities. Most of these private institutions do not offer geography at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels. The latter also is been experienced in public senior secondary schools in Nigeria where Geography as a subject is been relegated and replaced by newly introduced subjects like Animal husbandry, Citizenship education, Civic education etc. In the former secondary schools curriculum in Nigeria, Geography used to be one of the core subjects in sciences and commercials but now, the reverse is the case, it is a floating subject, it neither belong to science, art nor commercial. Aydin and Costum (2011) further stated that, if the students cannot learn well, one of the main reasons for this is that they are not interested in the subject. One of the important tasks for the teacher is to provide the motivation for the students such as positive classroom atmosphere established by teacher will provide confidence in the students. As a result, the students will develop a positive attitude and interest towards the subject.

Thus, the researcher had seen the need to investigate how senior secondary school students perceived geography as a subject and to examine the causative factors that cause decline in the number of students offering the subjects at senior secondary school level in the study area.

## **Statement of the Problem**

There is a noticeable dwindling interest of senior secondary school students in learning Geography as a subject in most of the secondary schools in Nigeria in recent times. This dwindling interest is reflected in the drastic reduction of number of students' enrolment for the subject in senior secondary school examination (WAEC and NECO) and as well as consistent poor performance in the said examination by few candidates that care to offer the subject. This has really affected the number of candidates opting to offer geography as a course of study in Nigerian higher institution of learning since secondary schools are feeder to these institutions. This trend has caused great concern to stakeholders, hence there is need to investigate variables that cause the decline in the enrolment of high school students in geography in Nigeria.

## **The objectives of the Study are as follows**

1. To examine how senior secondary school students in selected senior secondary schools in Atiba Local Government Area of Oyo State perceived geography as a subject in order to determine if these perceptions are causative factors in the decline in the number of students offering the subject at senior secondary school level.
2. To examine how teachers' disposition and teaching abilities affect the rate at which students offer the subjects.

## **Research Questions**

1. To what extent do students understand geography as a subject?
2. Does students' understanding of geography influence its selection as a subject?
3. Do students find geography an interesting subject?
4. Are students aware of career opportunities in geography as a subject?
5. Are there other school subjects competing with geography in senior secondary schools in Nigeria?
6. Are students aware of relevance of geography to future courses?
7. Do teachers make use of teaching aids while teaching geography?
8. Are students being taken out for field work/excursion?
9. Are teachers being attending in-service training to keep them abreast with recent development in their field?
10. Do you have geographical garden in your school?

## **Literature Review**

### **The Development and Philosophy of Geography In Nigeria**

Geography as an academic discipline before the Second World War was already a popular subject in many Nigerian schools and colleges. Geographic ideas were transmitted to various parts of Nigeria through the textbooks of some well-known British Geographers such as L. D. Stamp and J. H. Stembridge (Jimoh & Akindele, 2005). However, it was not until after the Second World War that the proper foundations of Geography were laid in the country. The base year upon which post war geography in Nigeria developed was 1948 when the University College of Ibadan was founded and Geography was inaugurated as one of the foundation disciplines. As from that year, geography as an organized body of ideas became an academic pursuit at the university level. Since the establishment as an academic discipline in Nigeria in 1948, there have been rapid changes in both the philosophical orientation and in the content of the training programmes.

Ojo (1978) identified three major periods in the development of geography in Nigeria. He identified the three phases as:

- The planning phase (1948-1960)
- The indigenization phase (1961-1970)
- and the consolidation phase (1971 till present)

**The planning phase:** In this phase, Nigeria geography was dominated by expatriate influence both in personnel and philosophy. This was associated solely with the University College, Ibadan. The period is characterized with the training of only a few geographers because many people who desired a degree in geography were unable to make it. The subject thus earned the title of an “impossible discipline” (Ojo, 1975). The teaching staff comprised mainly expatriates except A. L. Mabogunje who was recruited as an Assistant Lecturer in 1958. During this time, the syllabuses of courses taught were essentially of the University of London which was naturally tailored to the needs and interest of British students.

**The Indigenization Phase:** This period of geographical development in Nigeria reflects the political changes that took place in Nigeria in 1960 when the country became independent. The development of geography in Nigeria during this period is associated with the general educational development to some extent. During the early 1960s, four more universities were established at Ife, Nsukka, Zaria and Lagos each of which had geography as one of the foundation disciplines. At one time, the University College, Ibadan became full-fledged university in 1962. This development started the process of the indigenization of geography in Nigerian universities (Onokerhoraye, 1994). One aspect of this was the rapid growth in the number of Nigerians who acquired high degree in geography particularly the PhD which seems to have qualified most people for a teaching post in the university. As a result of the increasing number of qualified Nigerian geographers, the proportion of the expatriate staff started to diminish during this period. Thus by 1968, not only are Nigerians taking over the chairmanship of the department of geography in all the universities except one (Ahmadu Bello University), but a majority of staff in all the departments were Nigerians. Another remarkable development during this era was the introduction of quantitative geography at University of Ibadan in 1964. The course which focuses essentially on the application of descriptive and inferential statistics to geography was also adopted in subsequent years in other universities in the country.

**Consolidation Phase:** The period after 1970 which marked the end of the Nigerian Civil War characterized by the reinforcement of the trends of rapid development which began in the phase of indigenization. This period can be rightly said to be the consolidation phase in the development of modern geography in Nigeria. The period had some distinctive features. In the first place, more Nigerians were being trained and appointed as lecturers of geography in the various universities in the country. A large proportion of these have become professors. Secondly, the number of universities has been rising from 5 in 1970 to about 20 by 1980 and all these have departments of geography. Thirdly, many colleges of education designed to train geography teachers for secondary schools were established in Nigeria. Fourthly, a satisfactory mastery of new scientific geography has been accomplished and this has reflected in the orientation of geography research in Nigeria. Fifthly, there has been increasingly specialization in the geographical researches being done in Nigeria including the awarding of a number of PhDs by various universities in the country. Finally, Nigerian geography during this period got into the stream of world geography partly through the geographical publications emanating from the country, and partly through the participation of Nigerian geographers in the various activities of the International Geographical Union (IGU) (Jimoh & Akindele, 2005).

Graduates of geography from Nigerian universities, polytechnics and colleges of education are trained in the fundamental concept and methodology of the discipline as well as other

specialized areas which are quite useful for a wide range of professions who want to utilize the skills and analytical techniques of the geographer. There are certain unique aspects of a training of the average Nigerian geographer which provide a basis for career in different professions. Training of geographers in field work which makes them travel to different localities makes the geographers to easily adjust to new environments. Nigerian geographers are trained in various specialized branches of the discipline such as urban and regional planning, cartography, population geography, political geography, rural planning and development, agricultural geography, biogeography, geomorphology, climatology, hydrology, etc. In view of the skills and specialized training which contemporary Nigerian geographers acquire, career opportunities exist in a number of professions. Emielu (2008) itemize career opportunities in geography as presented below.

### **Careers/Professional Opportunities in Geography**

- Town planning/ regional planning
- Photogrammetry
- Teaching opportunities in secondary schools rising to become principal or proprietor.
- Administrative employment in civil service to become permanent Secretary or Secretary to Government (SSG).
- Geographical Information System (GIS) expert after a little training.
- Air Traffic Comptroller (after undergoing training).
- Landscaping and Design/ Consultancy in land management.
- Oceanography
- Environmental Management/Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- Travel and Tourism Agent.
- Cartography/Automated Cartography.
- Banking and employment in industry with success in Aptitude Test.
- One year MBA programme.
- Postgraduate Research leading to becoming a Lecturer rising to become a Professor or Vice Chancellor.
- Remote Sensing.
- Transport Management.
- Research Institute/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other relevant areas.
- Meteorologist/Weather Analyst.
- Scientist/Environmental Scientist.
- Environmental/Land Management.
- Surveyor/Surveying.
- Weather Reporter.
- Environmentalist/Environmental Care.
- Demography/Population Study.
- Park Ranger.
- Politics/Government.
- Resource Management.
- Water Management.
- Hydrologist.
- Council Worker
- Mining
- National Parks
- Biodiversity Study.
- Navigator

- Documentaries
- Astronomy
- Wildlife Ecologist.

### **Subjects that can be combined with Geography in UTME to Pursue Different Course of Studies.**

#### Geography/Mathematics

- Architecture
- Surveying
- Environmental Design
- Environmental Science

#### Geography/Economics

- Estate Management
- Business Administration
- Accounting
- Banking & Finance

#### Geography/Physics

- Aeronautics Engineering
- Meteorology
- Geology

#### Geography/Literature/Government

- Law

#### Geography/Biology/Chemistry

- Agricultural Science

#### Geography/Chemistry

- Mining and Mineral Science

#### Geography/Biology

- Forestry

#### Geography with any two Social Sciences subjects

- B.Sc. Geography
- B.Ed. Geography, etc.

### **Methodology**

The study adopts the survey research design.

### **Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques**

Senior secondary school students and teachers in public and private schools in Atiba Local Government Area of Oyo State constitute the study population. However, eight (8) senior secondary schools were randomly selected. They are; School of Science, Oyo, Oranyan Grammar School, Oyo, Aatan Comprehensive Grammar School, Koso, Oyo, Isale Oyo Commercial Grammar School, Oyo, Isale Oyo Community Senior Grammar School, Oyo, Bode Thomas Memorial Grammar School, Oyo, Isale Oyo Commercial Secondary School, Oyo, Alafin High School, Agunpopo, Oyo and Isale Oyo Grammar School, Oyo. The sample consists of twenty (25) students that were randomly selected from each of the eight schools totalling two hundred and one geography teacher equally randomly selected from each of the eight schools, making eight (8) teachers. In all there are two hundred and eight respondents..

### **Research Instruments**

Questionnaires were employed in collecting data from the respondents. The questionnaires were administered to collect data from both the students and the teachers to solicit responses from them.

### Methods of Data Collection

The researcher went personally to various schools selected for this study and questionnaires were administered to students and the teachers. The respondents were to tick the appropriate option for their views on each of the items on the questionnaires. Two hundred (200) copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the students and all were returned. Questionnaires were also distributed to the teachers to respond to. In all, there were 208 questionnaires forms.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive method was used to analyse data generated from the respondents using frequency counts, tables and percentages.

### Results and Discussion of Findings

**TABLE 1:**

	STUDENTS' ITEMS	Responses					
		SA	A	%	SD	D	%
1.	Do you have better understanding of geography as a subject?	16	36	52 (26%)	46	102	148 (74%)
2.	Does your level of understanding of geography influence your selection of the subject?	118	52	170 (85%)	13	17	30 (15%)
3.	Do you find geography interesting?	16	21	37 (18.5%)	67	96	163 (81.5%)
4.	Are you aware of abundant career opportunities in geography?	26	24	50 (25%)	98	52	150 (75%)
5.	Are there other subjects you find more interesting and easier than geography?	86	76	162 (81%)	20	18	38 (19%)
6.	Are you aware of relevance of geography to future courses?	32	26	58 (29%)	74	68	142 (71%)

Author's field survey Jan (2021)

From the table 1 above, majority of the students which constitute 102 (74%) do not have better understanding of geography as a school subject. That is why 170 (85%) of the respondents agreed with the fact that their poor understanding of the subject influenced their selection. Majority of the students 96 (81.5%) do not find geography class interesting. To them most of the concepts in geography are abstract and very difficult to understand. The students are not aware of abundant career opportunities in geography and this is evident in the responses of the student with 150 (75%) of them disagree with the variable. They did not know that with higher degree in geography there are better career opportunities for them.

The findings also revealed that there are other subjects at senior secondary school level students find more interesting and easy to understand than geography, subjects like civic education, government, animal husbandry, food and nutrition etc. and the ones competing with geography and the reason why there is low enrolment of students in geography. According to findings, those subjects can be easily handled by the students themselves without the assistance of any tutor, but for geography the reverse is the case. In addition, many of the students are not aware of relevance of geography to future courses at institutions

of higher learning. They do not know that geography can be combined with other commercial, science and art subjects to pursue course of study in higher institutions. Out of 200 students interviewed, 142 which constitute (71%) were not aware that geography can be combined with other relevant subjects to pursue both lucrative and professional courses in Colleges of Education, Polytechnic and Universities.

**TABLE 2:**

S/N	TEACHERS' ITEMS	Responses					
		SA	A	%	SD	D	%
1.	Are there enough geographical teaching aids in your school?	Nil	2	2 (25%)	4	2	6 (75%)
2.	Have you been taking student on field excursion/trips?	Nil	Nil	0 (0 %)	2	6	8 (100%)
3.	Have you been attending in-service training to keep you abreast with recent development in your field?	Nil	Nil	0 (0 %)	07	01	8 (100%)
4.	Do you have geographical garden in your school?	Nil	Nil		08	Nil	8 (100%)

Author's field survey Jan (2021)

From table 2 above, it is evident that there are not enough geographical teaching aids to teach students in the selected sampled schools. 75% of the teachers interviewed were of the opinion that, there are shortages of instructional materials to teach the students in their schools. In most of the schools, the subject was taught with high level of abstractions in spite of the numerous concepts, ideas and names that students have to contend with. This condition is one of the variables that account for poor interests and enrolments of students in geography at Senior Secondary Schools level. All the teachers interviewed agreed that they have not been taking students out of the school for field work and excursions. This would have aroused the students' interests if they have been taken out for field activities, this also accounts for low interest and enrolment of students in the subject. In most of these schools, there are no geographical gardens that would have boosted the students' interest in the subject. Also teachers have not been attending in-service training to keep them abreast of recent development in their chosen field and this in turn affects their output while teaching.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings revealed about the current status of geography education in the selected secondary schools in the study area, one can generalise that the subject has been relegated in Nigerian secondary schools as a result of lack of interest by the students, poor handling of the subject by the teachers and other newly introduced subjects competing with geography, among others. However, the following recommendations may help in tackling some of the problems facing geography education in Nigeria.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Geography teachers need to update their knowledge about modern approaches to teaching. This could be done through workshops, conferences, in-services training and seminars, they should be encouraged to apply modern technologies to re-conceptualize the curriculum and make schooling and learning more interesting.

Teachers should be interacting with the students and share with them their ideas about the role of geographical knowledge in everyday life. This will increase students' interest in



geography. This is because some students show lack of interest in geography in connection with their future job.

Teachers should ensure that fieldwork and other types of investigative work are integrated with the work in the classroom to make the subject more interesting and appealing to students.

Considering the importance of geography to national development and the role it plays in creating awareness on how environment should be conserved, it should be made compulsory in both primary and secondary schools to create sense of responsibility in Nigerians toward the society.

Geography teachers should make the use of instructional materials paramount while teaching in the classroom. Relevant geographical teaching aids like atlases, globes, maps, models, specimens etc. should always be put into use to concretise abstract concepts and phenomena. This will arouse students' interest and make them to have better understanding of the subject.

Curriculum planners and stakeholders in both state and federal ministries of education should make it mandatory for all secondary schools in Nigeria where geography is being taught to have standard geographical gardens. Students should be taken to the garden from time to time for practical works and this will go a long way in making the subject more easy and interesting to students.

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