EFFECTS OF CLUSTER TASK-BASED STRATEGY ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF PUPILS IN SOCIAL STUDIES IN OYO STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of the Cluster Task-Based Instructional Strategy on the academic achievement of upper basic pupils in Social Studies in Irepo Local Government Area, Oyo State. It investigated the strategy's main effect and its interaction with pupils' gender and school type. The study adopted a non-randomised pretest–posttest control-group quasi-experimental design. The population comprised upper basic pupils in Irepo LGA, and the researchers selected a sample of 140 pupils from intact classes in six schools using proportional random sampling. The Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT) was used to collect data; it was validated for content and had a test–retest reliability coefficient of 0.78. The study formulated two hypotheses and tested them at the .05 significance level. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The findings indicated a significant main effect of the strategy on pupils' achievement in Social Studies (F = 190.54, p ***[verify]****). The study reported no significant interaction effect involving strategy, gender, and school type (F = 0.64, p > .05). The study concludes that the strategy was associated with higher achievement, with no significant interaction by gender or school type. It recommends that Social Studies teachers consider using cluster task-based instruction to support pupils' learning.*

Keywords: Cluster Classroom, Cluster Task-Based Strategy, Pupils' Academic Achievement

Introduction

The Social Studies curriculum in Nigerian schools is intended to develop learners' knowledge, values and skills as responsible and active members of society. These outcomes require purposeful instruction and learning experiences that help pupils apply what they learn to social and civic issues. At the upper basic level, a strong foundation in Social Studies can support critical thinking, civic awareness and understanding of society. However, lecture-based instruction alone may not sustain pupils' interest or provide sufficient opportunities for active participation. Strategies such as Cluster Task-Based Instruction may offer an alternative by engaging pupils in structured learning tasks.

Social Studies is an integrated, multidisciplinary subject designed to prepare learners to become informed, responsible and democratically minded citizens. Yet concerns persist about how well classroom teaching equips pupils to understand and respond to social and environmental issues. Bakare (2024) observed that rote learning and limited classroom engagement may limit the knowledge and skills pupils develop to address societal problems. As learners encounter complex political, environmental and social issues, Social Studies instruction should provide opportunities to examine information, discuss ideas and apply knowledge. Obadiora (2019) similarly argued that Social Studies programmes in Nigeria often emphasize content knowledge over contextual and task-based learning.

The use of innovative instructional strategies remains a concern in Social Studies teaching. Ekiugbo (2024) reported that pupils' interest in the subject may be affected when teachers do not use engaging instructional approaches, and linked this concern to low academic achievement in basic education. Improving pupils' achievement therefore requires attention to how the subject is taught, including how much lessons involve active learning.

Cluster Task-Based Instructional Strategy may provide a structured way to engage pupils in learning tasks and applying Social Studies concepts. By organizing pupils into clusters to work on assigned tasks, teachers can encourage participation, discussion and problem-solving. The strategy may also accommodate differences among learners when tasks and groupings are planned appropriately. However, research should establish its effectiveness rather than assume it.

Previous studies of achievement in Social Studies have examined factors such as instructional resources, activity-based teaching and expository methods (Dawaki, 2017; Garba, 2017; Iqbal & Tayyaba, 2017; Ajaja & Mezicobi, 2018; Awodun & Oyeniyi, 2018; Dahiru, 2018; Theodora,

2021). This study addresses a related gap by examining the Cluster Task-Based Instructional Strategy and pupils' achievement. It also considers whether the strategy's effect differs according to pupils' gender and school type, factors that may be associated with achievement (Amosun et al., 2024; Ekiugbo, 2024), although findings on their influence are not uniform (Omojemite, 2025). Accordingly, the study investigates the effect of Cluster Task-Based Instructional Strategy on upper basic pupils' achievement in Social Studies in Oyo State, including its interaction with gender and school type.

Research Hypotheses

Ho1. There is no significant main effect of cluster task-based instructional strategy on achievement of pupils in Social Studies;

Ho2. There is no significant interaction effect of cluster task-based instructional strategy with pupils' gender and school type on their achievement in Social Studies.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a pretest–posttest, non-equivalent control-group quasi-experimental design, which allowed the use of intact classes. A 2 × 2 × 2 factorial structure was used to examine the instructional strategy (Cluster Task-Based Instructional Strategy or conventional instruction), pupils' gender (male or female) and school type (public or private). The experimental group received instruction using the Cluster Task-Based Instructional Strategy guide, while the control group received conventional instruction.

The study population comprised 3,872 pupils in public and private schools in Irepo Local Government Area, Oyo State: 2,642 in public schools and 1,230 in private schools, according to the Oyo State Universal Basic Education Board School Census (2024). The target population was Basic Seven pupils. Six schools were selected: two public and four private. The sample consisted of 140 pupils, with 74 assigned to the experimental group and 66 to the control group. Each group included pupils from two private schools and one public school.

Data were collected using the researcher-developed Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT), administered as both a pretest and a posttest. The test was based on the Upper Basic Social Studies curriculum and the instructional content for both teaching conditions. It comprised two sections: Section A collected pupils' demographic information, and Section B contained 40 multiple-choice

items with four response options. The items were designed to assess knowledge, understanding and application in line with Bloom's taxonomy. The test was reviewed for content validity and piloted with pupils in a school outside the study area. Test–retest scores were correlated using Pearson's product–moment correlation, producing a reliability coefficient of 0.78.

Data collection lasted seven weeks. In the first week, the researcher obtained approval from the selected schools and sought consent from pupils and their parents. Research assistants were trained to implement and assess the instructional packages. In the second week, both groups completed the pretest. The experimental and control groups then received their respective instruction over four weeks, with lessons conducted Monday to Friday. The researcher coordinated and monitored the sessions. A post-test was administered after the treatment period.

Frequencies and percentages summarised pupils' demographic characteristics. The hypotheses were tested using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). Null hypotheses were rejected when the *p*-value was below .05 and retained when it was equal to or greater than .05.

Results

The study aimed to determine the effects of the Cluster task-based Instructional Strategy on the Academic Achievement of Upper Basic Pupils in Social Studies. The results are presented as follows:

Presentation of Demographic Data

Table 1: Distribution of Study Participants based on School type and Gender

Groups	**School Type**		**Gender**		**Grand Total**
	Public	*Private*	*Male*	*Female*	
Cluster Task-Based	43	31	32	42	**74**
	(30.7%)	*(22.1%)*	(22.9%)	(30.0%)	(52.9%)
Conventional	42	24	32	34	**66**
	(30.0%)	*(17.1%)*	(22.9%)	(24.3%)	(47.1%)
Total	85	55	64	76	140
	(60.7%)	*(39.2%)*	(45.8%)	(54.3%)	(100%)

Table 1 presents the distribution of study participants. The study included 140 pupils: 74 (52.9%) received the cluster Task-Based instructional strategy (Experimental group), while 66 (47.1%) were in the control group and received the conventional strategy. The distribution of participants by school type shows that 85 participants (60.7%) were in public schools, while 55 participants (39.2%) were in private schools. By gender, female participants outnumbered their male counterparts. The number of female participants were 76 (54.3%) while 64 males (45.8%) participated in the study.

Testing of Research Hypotheses

Research Hypothesis One: *There is no significant main effect of cluster task-based instructional strategy on academic achievement of pupils in Social Studies.*

In order to test the above stated research hypothesis, the pretest and posttest data collected from the participants in experimental group (cluster task-based strategy) and control group (conventional method) were subjected to Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) using SPSS statistical software. The result of the analysis is presented in the table below.

Table 2: Summary of ANCOVA on significant main effect of cluster task-based strategy on academic achievement of pupils in Social Studies

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Corrected Model	5229.09	2	2614.54	126.72	0.00	
Intercept	3033.52	1	3033.52	147.03	0.00	
PRETEST	460.74	1	460.74	22.33	0.00	
GROUP	3931.24	1	3931.24	190.54	0.00	***Significant**
Error	2826.47	137	20.63			
Total	68542.00	140				
Corrected Total	8055.57	139				

a. R Squared = .649 (Adjusted R Squared = .644)

From Table 2 above, the value of F (190.54) is significant at the 0.05 alpha level ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant main effect of cluster task-based strategy on academic achievement of pupils in Social Studies, is not retained. It shows that there is significant main effect of cluster task-based strategy on academic achievement of pupils in Social Studies. This implies that the participants who were taught with cluster task-based strategy performed better than the participants who were taught using the conventional method. Therefore, the findings of this study revealed that there is a significant main effect of the cluster task-based strategy on the academic achievement of pupils in Social Studies.

Research Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant interaction effect of cluster task-based strategy with gender and school type on academic achievement of pupils in Social Studies.*

In order to test the above stated research hypothesis, the pretest and posttest data collected from the participants in experimental group (cluster task-based strategy) and control group (conventional method) while gender and school type of the participants identified as moderating variables were subjected to Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) using SPSS statistical software. The result of the analysis is presented in the table below.

Table 3: Summary of ANCOVA on significant interaction effect of cluster task-based strategy with gender and school type on academic achievement of pupils in Social Studies

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Corrected Model	5372.78	8	671.59	32.79	0.00	
Intercept	2706.84	1	2706.84	132.17	0.00	
Pretest	494.60	1	494.60	24.15	0.00	
Group	3919.54	1	3919.54	191.39	0.00	
Gender	2.15	1	2.15	0.10	0.74	
Schooltype	0.12	1	0.12	0.01	0.93	
Group * Gender	19.00	1	19.00	0.92	0.33	***Not significant**
Group * Schooltype	113.12	1	113.12	5.52	0.02	***Significant**
Gender * Schooltype	8.50	1	8.50	0.41	0.52	

Group * Gender * Schooltype	13.16	1	13.16	0.64	0.42	***Not significant**
Error	2682.78	131	20.47			
Total	68542.000	140				
Corrected Total	8055.571	139				

a. R Squared = .667 (Adjusted R Squared = .647)

The results in Table 3 above indicated that the F-value of 0.92 for the interaction of cluster task-based strategy and gender is not significant at the 0.05 alpha level ($p > 0.05$). This indicates that there is no significant interaction effect of cluster task-based strategy and gender on the academic achievement of pupils in Social Studies. On the contrary, the F-value of 5.52 concerning the interaction of cluster task-based strategy with school type is significant at the 0.05 alpha level ($p < 0.05$), which indicates that there is a significant interaction effect of cluster task-based strategy and school type on the academic achievement of pupils in Social Studies. Concerning the interaction effect of cluster task-based strategy with gender and school type, the result in the table revealed that the F-value of 0.64 is not significant at the 0.05 alpha level ($p > 0.05$). This shows that there is no significant interaction effect of cluster task-based strategy with gender and school type on academic achievement of pupils in Social Studies. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant interaction effect of cluster task-based strategy with gender and school type on academic achievement of pupils in Social Studies, is retained. This implies that the effect of cluster task-based strategy on academic achievement of pupils in Social Studies does not depend on gender and school type.

Discussion of Findings

The study examined the effect of Cluster Task-Based Instructional Strategy on upper basic pupils' academic achievement in Social Studies in Oyo State. The findings, as reported, showed a significant main effect of the strategy. Pupils taught using Cluster Task-Based Instruction performed better than those taught using the conventional strategy. The structured tasks and opportunities for active participation may have helped pupils engage with the lesson content and apply what they learned. This finding is consistent with Iqbal and Tayyaba (2017), who reported that activity-based instruction was more effective than lecture-based teaching, although their study involved senior secondary students. It also aligns with Omojemite (2025), who found that interactive teaching methods improved students' achievement in Social Studies.

The study also found no significant interaction effect between the instructional strategy, pupils' gender and school type. This suggests that the relationship between the strategy and achievement did not differ significantly across gender or school-type groups in this sample. This result is consistent with Awodun and Oyeniyi (2018), who found no substantial achievement difference between public and private secondary school students, and Ajaja and Mezicobi (2018), who reported no significant achievement differences by gender or school type in Social Studies.

However, other studies have reported differing results. Junaid and Ayinde (2018) found a significant interaction between treatment and gender in Social Studies achievement in Ibadan, while Ekiugbo (2024) reported higher achievement among male pupils exposed to activity-based instruction. Research on school location, a related but distinct variable from school type, has also found that context may interact with instructional methods. For example, Amosun et al. (2024) reported a significant interaction between a socio-constructive collaborative method and school location. Differences among studies may reflect variations in participant characteristics, teaching contexts, school environments and research designs.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that the Cluster Task-Based Instructional Strategy was associated with higher academic achievement among upper basic pupils in Social Studies than the conventional strategy. The study found no significant interaction involving the strategy, pupils' gender and school type. This suggests that the observed advantage did not differ significantly across these groups. By engaging pupils in structured, hands-on tasks, the strategy may help them apply Social Studies concepts during learning.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that:

1. Social Studies teachers incorporate structured tasks into lessons to encourage active pupil participation.
2. Teachers organise pupils into appropriate working groups and provide tasks that address varied learning needs.
3. School proprietors provide the materials and resources needed to implement cluster task-based instruction.

4. Curriculum developers include guidance and examples to help teachers identify topics suited to this strategy.
5. Teachers receive practical training in planning, facilitating and assessing cluster task-based lessons.

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