

Some Issues on Gender and the Teaching of Geography in Kano State Secondary Schools

Nuratu Mohammed

Department of Geography, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria

The study examined some issues on the teaching of geography in secondary schools in Nassarawa educational zone in Kano state from the gender perspectives. Stratified random sampling was used to select 15 schools out of the 34 senior secondary in the zone. For the selection of respondents, all the geography teachers in the selected schools were used as samples. This way a total of 26 geography teachers were selected for the study. Data was gotten through the administration of questionnaire and focus group discussion with the 26 teachers and 70 male and female students in the sampled schools. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results of the study shows 85% males and 15% females teach geography in Kano state secondary schools. Some of the reasons that account for this are lack of interest (31%), broad nature of the subject (31%) the fear of the subject which emanates from the females' negative perception of themselves (31%) related to this is the patriarchal ideology of the study environment and also miss information from predecessors (7%). It was also found that lack of interest was the result of broad content of geography coupled with inadequate teaching and learning materials as well as lack of qualified teachers to handle the subject. In the light of the above this study recommends the need to make geography more interesting by providing all the necessary facilities needed to make the subject interesting amongst others

Keywords: Gender, focus group, patriarchy and development

Introduction

Geography literally means the 'description of the earth. But modern geography is concerned with more. It is concerned with man as well as the earth, with relationships and analysis as well as description. It is the study of the earth as the home of man or precisely, a science of spatial relationships which focuses attention on the interaction between man and his environment. Modern geography is a science of synthesis which seeks to understand the character of a place in terms of total integration of the various phenomena which characterize a place as well the interrelationships between places (Hagget, 1975; Adeyemo, 2010) It is equally with geography that spatial forms can best be seen and analysed. Most science specialized in one particular set of phenomena such as plants, rocks, economic or political behavior and others. The geographer does not study people, crops, customs, minerals, soils and other things for their own sake, but because he sees them as part of an interrelated complex that give a place its character. It is the place whether in form of a region, country, state, town, city village or any other form of a place that geographers want to study and understand, no other science does that. In view of the above characteristics of geography, as a school

subject therefore, it 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. Geography is a distinct and dynamic science and or social science discipline that deals with the study of man and his physical environment. It therefore helps young people to appreciate the value of their environment and its vast natural resources. As a subject, it is versatile, expressive and intellectually stimulating. It exhibits a correlation with all other school subjects. It instils in the students the need to appreciate and develop a sense of responsibility towards their own society.

Despite its relevance in this dynamic world, one of the criticism levelled against geography is it's very wide, though an interesting subject, which touches on most other subjects such as the social studies or the social environmental studies. It calls for a lot of hard work to master and enjoy it at the S.S.S level but with the right attitude and approach it is usually a pleasure to learn it. Despite this, there has been an observable sharp decline in the number of students that offer geography at the senior secondary level in Kano. In contrary to what was observed in Botswana where it

was found that more students opt for geography from the list of available optional subjects Adeyemi (2010). Some of the variables thought to be responsible for these have been identified as: Teacher's attitude and relationship with pupils has a very significant impact on the student's attitude towards the subject, Teacher's knowledge and academic competence in his field or area of specialization, student's attitude to work and peer group influence and gender perspective, amongst others.

Place of Geography in Nigeria's Secondary School Curriculum

The 1978 National Policy on Education in Nigeria saw the emergence of great innovations in most education programs including geography. Contrary to what obtained under the colonial rule where the discipline was extremely descriptive rather than quantitative. The major breakthrough in education reforms in Nigeria emerged with the National Policy on Education, formulated in 1976 revised in 1981 and 1998 and updated in 2004, (NPC, 2004) which conformed to the philosophy of the Nigerian education system contrary to the traditional geography curriculum in Nigeria which was western oriented.

Ever since the 2004 revision, a number of revisions have taken a place the most recent being the 2010 basic education curriculum review which saw the removal of some of the contents amongst which was the regional geography of Africa. Students now opt for regional geography of Nigeria only instead of the past curriculum where students in addition to taking regional geography of Nigeria also take of Africa and West Africa. Other newly introduced courses are geographic information System (GIS), fieldwork Surveying and cartography.

The most critical revision is the making of geography an elective course which is no longer a compulsory course for science students. Another challenge in education general and geography in particular has been the issue gendering of subjects and courses in Nigeria. The issue of women in education in general and geography in particular as is the case with other subjects can be viewed from the gender perspective. According to Falola (2001) Gender refers to the distinction between men and women based on social, cultural and ideological process including socialization which include discrimination in educational process in terms of the kind of education e.g. domestic science and nursing for girls and women and engineering and medicine for boys and men (Falola, 2001:7). The study

examines some issues relating to the teaching of geography from the gender perspective with a view to analyzing the factors for the gender variation in its teaching in secondary schools in Kano state. To achieve the aim of the study the following questions were asked: what is the position of geography in the School curriculum today? Do we have gender dichotomy in geography in the study area? What are the reasons that we have the dichotomy? How can this issue of dichotomy be resolved?

Materials and Methods

Study area

The study was carried out in Kano state. Kano state lies within latitude $10^{\circ}30'N$ to $12^{\circ}30'$ and $7^{\circ}30'$ to $9^{\circ}25'E$. It is bordered in the north and east by Jigawa state in the west by Katsina and Kaduna states and in the south by Kaduna and Bauchi states. Specifically however the study was conducted in Nassarawa education zone is found within the Kano metropolitan area. The kind of education e.g. domestic science and nursing for girls and women and engineering and medicine for boys and men (Falola, 1996:7).

The state, Kano lies within the Sudan Savana belt with the Guinea Savana bordering in the south. The mean monthly temperatures range from $21^{\circ}C$ in the coolest months to over $31^{\circ}C$ in the hottest months. The average rainfall in a normal year is about 1000mm in the southern part of the state (Olofin, 2001).

Hausa and Fulani ethnic group are the predominant tribe in the state. However other minority tribes /ethnic groups also found in the state are the Yoruba and Ibo (accounting for the large segment of non-indigenous population), Tiv, Nupe, Idoma, Igala and a host of others. Islam is the dominant religion. As far as education and other social amenities is concerned, there has been expansion of the educational sector in the state in general and the study area i.e. Nassarawa educational zone in particular with over 72 public senior secondary schools.

Data sources and sampling technique

Primary data were collected through the aid of well-structured questionnaire. A multi stage random sampling was employed to select the respondents. Based on the division of the Nassarawa educational zone into the four cardinal direction North, Southeast and West a total 26 teachers and 70 students were randomly selected from 15 schools in Nassarawa educational zone in Kano state.

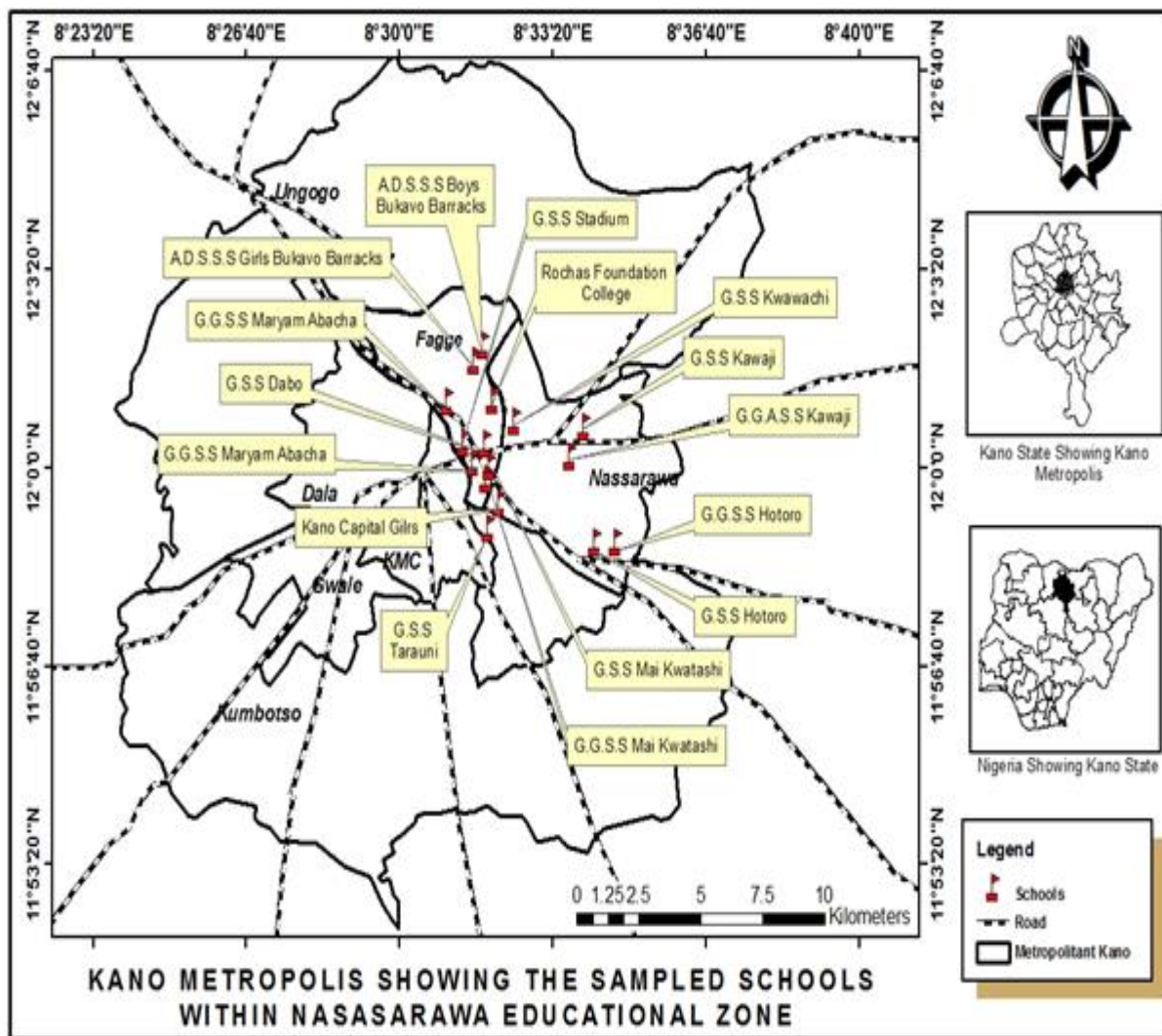


Figure 1. Kano metropolis showing the sampled Schools within Nasasarawa educational zone. Source: Cartography Lab Geography Department B.U.K. (July, 2013).

Results and Discussion

The results of the findings is presented in the tables and discussed below. As far as the educational qualification of the teachers’ is concerned, it was found that 62% of the male respondents had Nigerian

certificate of education (NCE) 19% had First degree and only 4% had ordinary diploma. For the females approximately 7% had NCE and first degree respectively (table1).

Table 1: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Educational Qualification	MALES	%	FEMALES	%
NCE	16	62	2	7.6
DEGREE	5	19	2	7.6
OTHERS	1	4	0	0
TOTAL	22	85	4	15.2

Table 2 shows the gender of the respondents .The inference drawn from the table is that the teaching of geography is dominated by the males where it was found that of the total teachers teaching geography, approximately 22 (85%) are males while only 4(15%) are females. This is a reflection of gender dichotomy in subjects offered in schools amongst males and females which also extend to areas of specialization.

This confirmed Falola’s (2001) findings which says that Gender refers to the distinction between men and women based on social ,cultural and ideological process including socialization which include discrimination in educational process in terms of the kind of education e.g. domestic science and nursing for girls and `women and engineering and medicine for boys and men (Falola, 2001:7).

Table 2: Gender of Respondents

Gender	N	%
Males	22	85
Females	4	15
Total	26	100

Majority of teachers teaching geography studied geography as a core course either at the NCE Or Undergraduate level. Only 2(9%) of the male did other courses other than geography and only teach geography due to inadequate geography teachers in such schools. And in fact prior to the recent curriculum revision in 2010, virtually most of the students that graduated from secondary schools in Kano state had one reason or the offer geography either as art or science students.

85% of the respondents said there are more male teachers than female teachers teaching geography in Kano state secondary schools. This cannot be unconnected with the attitude of the people towards education of girls in the region which oppose western type of education on cultural grounds.

The inference drawn from table 4 on the issue of gender and the teaching of geography is that majority

As for the number and gender of geography of students in the study area, the inference drawn from table 3, is that there more male students than female students offering geography this has to do with the cultural attitudes of the people as earlier pointed out.

Table 3: Number of Geography students enrolled in the secondary schools.

Schools	N	Males	%	Females	%
G.S.S Kawaji	2974	180	6%	-	-
G.G.S.S Kawaji	2379	-	-	120	5%
G.G.S.S Dabo	1779	-	-	122	7%
G.S.S Stadium	2415	190	8%	-	-
G.G.S.S Maikwatashi	2420	-	-	80	3%
G.S.S Maikwtashi	1502	120	8%	-	-
G.S.S Kwakwachi	2214	165	7%	-	-
G.G.S.SMaryam Abacha	935	-	-	86	9%
A.D.S.S Bukavu(boys)	4049	120	3%	-	-
A.D.S.S Bukavu(girls)	2308	-	-	85	4%
G.G.S.S Hotoro	1103	-	-	80	7%
G.S.S Hotoro	1160	160	14%	-	-
Rochas Secondary	1100	40		25	
Kano capital (boys)	1600	65		-	-
Kano capital (Girls)	1865	-	-	80	

On the reasons why there are more males than females in geography respondents opinion was sought , According to some of the teachers, majority (31%) express lack of interest, (31%) wide scope of geography (31%) said Negative perception of self-amongst others are seen as some of the reasons. The

results of the focus group discussion held with 70 students,40 males and 30 females shown in table 4 shows that most (36%)males and(29%) females were of the view that geography as a subject is too broad, almost half of the male (43%) and (29%) female students expressed lack of interest which

could have been borne out of broad nature of the subject. Another factor identified was the peer group influence where it was found that 43% male and 19% female students attested to being influenced to offer the subject. As far as the relevance of the course to future career of the students is concerned, the females are in the lead with 29%. Most of the females agreed that geography is more relevant to the males since they are going to pursue science-based careers such as piloting, medicine, engineering etc. This has to do with the negative perception of themselves (females). The abstract nature of the subject is seen as contributing to student's lack of interest as shown in the

table where 36% male and 29% female students opined. Poor methods of teaching have also been seen as an important influence in the choice of geography as a core subject by students where it was found that 29% male and 14% female students attested to. The poor method of teaching could be the result of inadequate qualification of the teachers (table 1). As for lack of infrastructures, 50% male and 36% females said lack of the basic infrastructures such as lab, textbooks tend to compound the already difficult situation. Some students, 29% male and 14% female students said they were guided by their parents in selecting geography as one of their main courses.

Table 4: Attitudes of Respondents towards Geography as a core course

	Items	AGREED		DISAREE		%			
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	Broad Nature of the subject	25	20	15	10	36	29	21	14
2	Lack of interest	30	20	10	10	43	29	14	14
3	Peer group influence	25	13	15	17	36	19	21	24
4	Has no relevance to my future career	13	20	27	10	19	29	39	14
5	Too abstract to understand	25	20	15	10	36	29	21	14
6	I don't like the teachers method	20	10	20	20	29	14	29	29
7	No instructional materials to simplify the subject.	35	25	5	5	50	36	7	7
8	Parental guide	20	10	20	20	29	14	29	29

On a general note as far as lack of interest is concerned, the results gotten from the focus discussion with the students points to the fact that this emanates from lack of infrastructures such as geography laboratories, standard library, weather stations and other infrastructures needed to simplify the subject and make it more concrete. From the field work carried out for this study shows that not a single school in the study area had either a geography laboratory nor a standard weather station and other infrastructures needed for effective teaching and learning of geography.

In addition to lack of infrastructures, lack of qualified teachers was also seen as a reason for lack of interest by both male and female students. Table 1 where 69% of the respondents had NCE and only 26% had a first degree. The time allotted to teaching geography which is often inadequate contributes to lack of interest by most students. , 90% of the respondents in all the schools sampled were of the opinion that geography needs to be allotted more time so as to be able to cover the content contained in the new curriculum.

The over crowdedness of the classes has been seen as one of the reasons for lack of interest by both male and female students in most subjects including

geography. For most of the sampled schools the average in any class was found to be 60 students in some cases there may be more than 90 in a class. This shows that the average number of students in geography in all the schools visited exceed the standard obtained in the developed countries. This is connected with the high population of Nigeria as a developing nation and the high demand for education.

Most females have a negative perception of themselves especially in the Northern part of Nigeria where this study was carried. This has to do with the underestimation of their own self-worth. This negative perception has its origin from the patriarchal system operating in most developing countries (This is seen as male domination of women in virtually all the fields of endeavor) and the socio-cultural values of the study environment which for most part encourages early marriage over and encourages male domination over women in virtually all endeavors including western education.

Conclusion

This paper examined some issues on gender and the teaching of geography in secondary schools in Kano state, Nigeria. It was discovered that although disparity

exists in the male female ratio amongst the teachers and the student, the attitude of students towards the subject is not only gender based but emanates from psycho- social and institutional factors.

Recommendation

In view of the findings of this research the following recommendations are put forward: There is the need to make available infrastructures needed for effective teaching of concepts in geography.

Equally important in this wise is the provision of geography laboratories and related infrastructures needed for effective teaching and learning of geography in schools. Also to meet the demand of the teeming populace as far as education and is concerned, government, stake holders and community should ensure that more structures are put in place to accommodate the students therefore checking the problem of over crowdedness of the schools so that an average of 1:40 becomes the ideal as opposed to the present situation that exist in most Kano state secondary schools where by an average of 90 students is the norm rather than the rule.

There is the need to create an enabling environment for students to develop interest in geography through the provision of qualified teachers necessary to build a solid foundation developed at the secondary level which is likely to graduate to the tertiary level.

Equally important is the issue of funding which should not be left for the government alone as such there is the need for community participation in the funding of education. More importantly women should be enlightened on developing their sense of worth self and should learn not to underestimate what they can do.

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