

Effect of Social Facilitation on Classroom Performance

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of social facilitation on the performance of teachers and students in Lagos state secondary schools. One hundred and twenty six teachers and three hundred and seventy students formed sample for the study. The instrument used for the study was the Teachers' and Students' Performance Scale (TSPS). TSPS was used to assess the performance of teachers and students in the classroom. Two hypotheses were tested. Results showed statistically significant effect of social facilitation and audience effect on classroom performance ($t, -7.895 = p 0.000 < 0.05$. and $t, -13.001 = p 0.000 < 0.05$), which was attributed to the type of presence and the kind of consequence associated to the presence.

Keywords: social facilitation, classroom performance, formative and summative evaluation

Classroom performance is a good indicator of a school's overall effectiveness, the productivity and accountability demonstrated by students and teachers. To achieve the main objective of education, which is to equip students with requisite knowledge and skills to enable them contribute effectively to national development, classroom performance became the priority of stakeholders. Students' as well as teachers' performance are assessed in the classroom to ascertain how well certain skills and methods are being successfully applied to meet students' learning needs and their level of understanding and competence. Therefore, Black and William (1998) emphasised the need to utilise both summative and formative assessment methods in the classroom for students' performance and learning evaluation. Summative assessment is evaluation conducted at the end of certain periods of time in order to judge the sufficiency of students' or teachers' performances and knowledge. It is used to evaluate certain learning outcomes and for administrative/personnel decisions like promotion, salary increase, demotion, dismissal, awards and/or meeting public/government accountability demands. Formative assessment on the other hand evaluates the process of learning, is a part of the teaching process used to discover gaps and adjust both teaching and learning processes to the students'

learning needs immediately in the process of learning. Results of formative evaluation are used to improve classroom instruction, student learning, and to foster professional growth of the teacher (Gold, 2001).

Unfortunately, in contemporary Nigeria, summative evaluation has emerged as the major established yardstick and the most practical way of assessment, formative assessment is in rare use. Teachers' performance is based on examination not on feedback from quality of teaching and the result of evaluation has never been geared towards helping teachers improve their skills individually or collectively. Evaluations are generally conducted as infrequent and perfunctory events in satisfaction of bureaucratic requirements, basically for promotion. Gao (2002) however asserts that one form of assessment cannot provide a full picture of the situation, relying on one of the two methods of classroom assessment may lead to student learning needs becoming unclear. Thompson, Sebastienelli and Murray (2009) added that grades are just the most common manifestation of a broader tendency on the part of schools to value product more than process, results more than discovery and achievement more than learning. If teachers and students are led to focus on how well they are doing more than on what they're doing, they may do whatever they think is necessary to make it look as though they are succeeding. Kirby (2011) asserts that individual's performance does not rely solely on their abilities, but is also impacted by the internal awareness of being evaluated. Performance can be greatly affected by situation factors, thus making it possible to entirely alter the outcome of a situation. This can be very important when considering how anyone will perform under evaluation and how to potentially prepare for those situations.

Thus, social psychologists emphasised the importance of social facilitation on individual's performance. Social facilitation according to Straus (2001) is the tendency for individuals to do better on simple tasks (well-learned) but worse on complex task (not well-learned) when in the presence of others. The mere presence of other people will enhance performance in speed and accuracy of well-practiced tasks, but will degrade the performance of less familiar tasks (Aiello and Svec, 1993). The mere or imagined presence of individuals in social situations creates an atmosphere of evaluation. Studies on social facilitation Triplett (1889), Allport (1920), Zajonc (1969), Baron (1980) and Thompson, Sebastienelli and Murray (2009) provide explanation for the effect of social presence on learning and performance, why in the presence of others simple task performance is enhanced and complex task performance is impaired. Triplett (1889) and Allport (1920) establish the effect of the mere presence of others on performance, Zajonc (1969, 1980) asserts that change in performance due to the mere presence of others is a drive or an arousal which enhances simple task performance or impairs complex task performance.

Baron (1980) argues that when other people are watching, it creates an attention conflict between the task being performed and the watching others. When the task is easy individuals can successfully narrow their focus to the task at hand, hence performance improves because of the drive effect to which Zajonc

refers. When the task is tricky or complex individuals suffer from attention overload and performance gets worse. Huguet, Galvaing Monteil & Dumas (1999) however noted that the way the audience is perceived determines the performance, who is the audience? Are they evaluators, co-actors, competitors or passive observers. The role of the person observing has significant effect on evaluation, Is the person an expert or a novice. Huguet et al. in their studies found that attentive audiences are more distracting than inattentive audiences. According to Aiello & Douthitt (2001) the type of presence and the kind of consequence associated to the presence influences performance. The presence of someone considered to be evaluative would likely trigger more drive than the presence of someone who was not able to evaluate performance.

Consequently, this implies that people's performance does not rely solely on their abilities, but is also impacted by the internal awareness of being evaluated. Performance can be greatly affected by situation factors, thus making it possible to entirely alter the outcome of the situation. This explains the need for the use of both summative and formative evaluation for classroom performance. It also suggests that teachers and students would likely prepare adequately for their lessons in anticipation for evaluation to ensure positive performance.

The Problem

In contemporary Nigerian society summative evaluation has emerged as the major established yardstick and the most practical way of classroom assessment than formative evaluation because summative assessment is much simpler to conduct and it provides an objective picture of the respondent's skills and knowledge. However, psychologists have asserted that individual's performance does not rely solely on their abilities, but is also impacted by the internal awareness of being evaluated. Hence, the need for formative assessment, which should be applied more often in the classroom to facilitate adequate and current information about teaching and learning needs. Contemporary counsellors such as Bryan, Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, & Day-Vines (2009) have ceased to see counselling as only a problem solving process but a preventive process which aims at restraining potential problems. Hence, since one of the major areas of counselling is educational counselling, it is inevitable to be concerned about teaching and learning in order to identify and address learning outcomes. Therefore, the contemporary state of focusing more on summative evaluation than formative evaluation in Nigerian schools calls for preventive counselling intervention.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of social facilitation on classroom performance of teachers and students in Lagos State Secondary Schools.

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant effect of social facilitation on classroom performance of teachers and students in Lagos State Secondary Schools.
2. There will be no significant audience effect on the performance of teachers and students in Lagos State Secondary Schools.

Methods

Research Design

The study was designed to be a one-group pre-test-post-test design with the observation of classroom teaching without the knowledge of the teacher and students followed by another observation with the knowledge of the teacher and students and the information that the audience were from the inspectorate division of the State Ministry of Education. The essence of the first and second observations was to determine the influence of the presence of others on classroom performance. The observation of teaching was made possible through the use of the CCTV camera. The camera was installed in the selected classroom initially without the knowledge of the teacher and the student for the first observation, while at the second observation both the students and teachers were aware of their being observed (presence of others). They were also informed that their observers were from the State Ministry of Education (type of presence). Therefore, the influence of the presence, the type of presence and the kind of consequence associated to the presence were all considered.

Participants

The sample selected for this study consists of 126 teachers and 370 students from six randomly selected public secondary schools in Lagos State. Twenty one (21) teachers were randomly selected from each school. Twenty teachers were selected to act as social facilitators; the observers. They were to observe and rate the performance of each teacher and the students using the Teachers' and Students' Performance Scale (TSPS). A teacher was selected to teach while all students in his/her classroom represent students' sample for each school. Each class has a minimum of 55 and a maximum of 70 students.

Instrument

An assessment form, named Teachers' and Students' Performance Scale (TSPS), modified from the Teaching Practice Assessment Form of the Faculty of Education, Lagos State University, Nigeria, was used to assess the influence of social facilitation on the process of teaching and learning. Will teachers and students perform better when they realise they are being observed especially by significant others? TSPS is a 25 items questionnaire of five sections apart from the personal data section which captured the respondent's personal information such as name and sex. The five sections are: Lesson Plan, Instructional Materials, Presentation, Class Management & Control and Students' Activities & Personality. The rating scale of TSPS is 5-point, with zero (0) as the lowest obtainable score and 4 the highest. A total score of 39 and below = 0 point, 40 –

49 = 1point, 50-59 = 2, 60-69 = 3, 70 above = 4points. To ensure internal consistency, content validity was re-established by a panel of experts consisting of members of the Faculty of Education, Lagos State University. Reliability of the instrument was conducted with a sample of teachers and secondary school students who were not part of the sample for the study. A reliability coefficient score of $r = 0.86$ was established for the instrument.

Methods of Data Analysis

Scores generated from the first and second observation of classroom performance of the six teachers and their students by the 120 teachers who were the social facilitators and significant others was analysed with the t-test statistical tool and all analyses were held significant at 0.05 level of significant.

Results

The first hypothesis states that there is no significant effect of social facilitation on classroom performance of teachers and students in Lagos State Secondary Schools. The researchers wanted to ascertain if there would be a change in the performance of teachers and students alike when they realised that they are being observed especially by significant others. Results presented in Table 1 shows a statistically significant effect of social facilitation on classroom performance $t, -13.001 = p 0.000 < 0.05$. The hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Table 1

The t-test of Effect of Social Facilitation on Performance

Classroom Assessment	N	Mean	Mean diff	t	df	Sig.
Observation without knowledge	120	2.20				
Observation with knowledge	120	3.87	-1.667	-13.001	119	.000

The second hypothesis states that there is no significant audience effect on the performance of teachers and students in Lagos State Secondary Schools. What was examined here was the effect of teachers and students having an idea of being observed and the personality of the observers on classroom performance? Result presented in Table 2 shows a statistically significant audience effect on classroom performance $t, -7.895 = p 0.000 < 0.05$, which means teachers and students' performances improved when the observers were Inspectors from the State Ministry of Education.

Table 2
The t-test of Audience Effect on Classroom Performance

Classroom Assessment	N	Mean	Mean diff	t	df	Sig.
Researcher	120	3.87				
Inspector	120	4.56	-.865	-7.895	119	.000

Discussion

The statistically significant effect of social facilitation on teachers and students performance in the classroom was not surprising. Huguet, Galvaing Monteil & Dumas (1999) already noted that the way the audience is perceived determines the performance, who is the audience? Hence, the drastic improvement in the performance of teachers and learners in this study is attributed to the presence of others and the kind of consequence associated to the presence of others. Performance of participants in this study improved when they realised that they are being assessed, more importantly when they were informed that the assessor is from the Inspectorate Division of the board of Education. This finding is in line with the position and findings of related studies (Baron, 1980; Aiello and Svec, 1993; Aiello and Douthitt, 2001; Straus, 2001; & Thompson, Sebastienelli and Murray, 2009) that provided explanation for the effect of social presence on individual's performance.

In line with Huguet, Galvaing Monteil & Dumas (1999) that the way the audience is perceived determines the performance, is applicable in this study, majority of the classroom rules that were neglected when participants were not aware of being evaluated were taken into consideration when they realised they are being evaluated. For example in the first assessment, teachers did not use instructional materials at all, they were a bit indifferent on classroom management and students' level of comporment was very low.

However with the awareness that they were assessed, these aspects as well as other aspects improved. The fact that the teachers were informed that they would be evaluated made them to adequately prepare for the lesson thus confirming the position of Straus (2001) that individuals will do better on well-learned tasks but worse on not well-learned task in the presence of others. Rather than the task to be complex as a result of the presence of the inspector, it became simple because of the preparation (well-learned) and the implication of not wanting to face the board for query or at the extreme losing their job.

Hence, confirming the position of Black and William (1998) on the need to utilise both summative and formative assessment methods to improve classroom performance and learning. Once teachers realise that their promotion is strictly a result of their performance (summative and formative) then, it becomes the drive (Zajonc, 1980) that will enhance performance. The fact that instructional materials and classroom management improves drastically when teachers realised they were being evaluated by a significant observer (inspector),

further emphasised the need for formative assessment and confirmed the assertion of Gold (2001) that formative assessment will expose the gaps in the teaching and learning process and immediately corrective measures to adjust both teaching and learning processes to students' learning needs is ensured.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The findings of this study have implications for counselling, policy and practice, based on these findings it is recommended that classroom evaluation should be strictly through summative and formative assessment and not basically summative as currently practiced. The contemporary position of evaluating only through summative assessment should be reconsidered because of the advantages of using both over only one form. Assessment based on both will fulfil two related purposes of personal growth and accountability (Duke & Stiggins, 1990). Both purposes of teacher support and accountability can be addressed in a single evaluation system if carefully designed and implemented.

There is urgent need for constant and periodic assessment, in our classrooms to ensure effective teaching and learning and probably reduce the cheating syndrome. Once the teachers and students alike are conscious of the periodic assessment, all hands will be on deck to ensure appropriate teaching and learning at all times. For example, most of the teachers in the first observation did not have instructional materials, but when they were informed about the next observation and who will be assessing their classroom, they all had instructional materials for their lessons. The counsellor has a role to play in ensuring structured observation, where occasionally the representative of either the inspectorate division or the counsellor, visits the classroom to complete a checklist or ratings form on classroom performance, which will form part of teachers' evaluation and feedback on classroom performance.

It is important to communicate results of the observation to teachers so that areas of defects could be noted and adjusted. This will enhance adequate preparedness and appropriate methodology as displayed by participants in this study

In conclusion, if the overall aim of counsellors, educators and policymakers is to improve the quality of education in schools and if the quality of education could only be improved through evaluation, then the central focus should be on ensuring the use of formative and summative evaluation to enhance effective classroom performance.

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