

Achieving Nigerian Educational Objectives through Effective Social Studies Instruction

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Abstract: *The paper focused on reviewing the extent of achieving Nigerian Educational objectives in Primary Schools through effective delivery of Social Studies instruction. The goals of Nigerian education is build: a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy and a land full of opportunities for all citizens; and the Nigerian's philosophy of education therefore is based on: the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen, the full integration of the individual into the community and the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system. It is a 'must' call to all the schools in Nigeria to initiate programme that will improve relevancy and comprehensiveness in promoting language development, communication skills, numerical ability and integrated approach that will lead to the achievement of the educational objectives. Social Studies through its exposure to cultural, religious, population, family related issues and political education helps to cultivate good social and healthy habits that ensure spiritual and physical survival of man as a member of a social group. It refers to the subject matter, possessing skills, attitudes and activities that focus on society and on individuals as members of a social group. Social Studies as an embracing discipline for all and a basic discipline for social development has, as one of its objectives to correct the ills of the society and produce a better sounder generation and new breed of disciplined Nigeria. Therefore, if the subject is effectively taught should help to solve social problems that are facing developing countries like ours (Nigeria) where the old norms are fast losing their grips and without any effective substitute to replace them. The effectiveness of Social Studies instruction would help to ameliorate the deteriorating social ills through effective planning and resource management in classroom interaction that would equip the learners with life surviving skills. Based on these, it is recommended that Social Studies teacher should be familiar with and internalize the contents of Social Studies so as to interpret its contents and encourage its meaning.*

Keywords: *Educational Objectives, Social Studies and Effective instruction*

I. Introduction

In keeping with the educational philosophy of developmentalism the primary school is the embryo of the whole education system. As such, the elements of the complete educational structure must be embodied in the primordial make-up. In short, the schools in Nigeria must initiate the endeavour to promote relevance and comprehensiveness in promoting language development, communication skills, numerical ability and integrated approach. Social Studies through its exposure to cultural, religious, population, family related issues and political education helps to cultivate good social and health habits that ensure spiritual and physical survival of man as a member of a social group.

Explaining further, Ikumelu and Oyibe (2011: 1) opine that "Social Studies refers to the subject matter, possessing skills, attitudes and activities that focus on society and on individuals as members of a social group". This shows that the subject (Social Studies) is purely an area of school curriculum mainly designed for the study of man and how he fits into a social group by utilizing the necessary attitudes, values and skills at his reach to make the planet earth better than he met it. Social Studies can thus help the Nigerian citizens generally to develop the ability to respect the worth and dignity of individuals, it will help in the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity, instill in man a disposition for acceptance of attitudinal change or rebranding in order to tame the tide of corruption which has enveloped all sectors of life in Nigeria.

The responsibility of educational enterprise is to ensure the attainment of the above mentioned objectives and thereby lay the foundation for national development. It is in keeping with these laudable objectives that Ukeje (1997: 22) states that; "if the child is at the centre of the education system, the teacher is the fulcrum of the educative process". This implies the harmonization and relevance of school offerings to the need of the society requires an effective programme and effective Resource Management in order to build up high motivation among pupils in the pursuit of their studies. Managwende (1994) re-echo the role of the teacher when he stated that teachers constitute a vital human component in the education process. Social Studies is an embracing discipline for all and a basic discipline for social development. According to the Federal Ministry of employment and Youth Development (1993: 7), "education for all was interpreted to mean basic education

which is aimed at: equipping every individual child, youths and adults with such knowledge and skills as to enable him develop to his fullest capacity, derive maximum social, economic and cultural benefit from his membership of society and fulfill his obligation. It should also keep alive in him a spirit of inquiry, a desire for problem-solving and life-long interest in living”.

Social Studies has, as one of its objectives to correct the ills of the society and produce a better sounder generation and new breed of disciplined Nigeria. This explains why Awe in Ikwumelu and Oyibe (2011:3), is of the view that

...Social Studies is a discipline if properly programmed and effectively taught should help to solve social problems that are facing developing countries like ours (Nigeria) where the old norms are fast losing their grips and without any effective substitute to replace them.

The teachers of Social Studies have been called to achieve this in an already menaced society like Nigeria. A country where few members have more money than the whole country put together and a greater percentage of its population throw knowledge and wisdom into the dustbin to the preference for money thereby allowing corruption, injustice and all forms of immorality to thrive leaves much to be desired. In an attempt to affirm the relevance of Social Studies in addressing Nigeria social problems, Bozimo and Ikwumelu (2009) maintain that Social Studies aims at helping people develop the ability to make decisions so that they can resolve personal problems and shape policy by participating in intelligent social action. They also state that Social Studies is concerned not only with knowledge but also with attitudes, skills and values. Ikwumelu (2002) holds that it gives an opportunity for important social and moral issues such as attitudes to the destitute, poverty, corruption, racialism and different types of government, cruelty to animals and children, brutality and injustice to be introduced into curriculum. To achieve these objectives therefore implies that, all the teachers of Social Studies in all affected levels of education need to be familiar with the content and methods of teaching the subject in order to interpret the content of Social Studies correctly and encourage its learning.

Regrettably, a clear observation shows that Nigerian system of education has become bookish with the quest for paper qualification given undue prominence with little or no attention paid to the development of attitude and behaviour of the learners. This called for the establishment of Social Studies as a core school subject to pay serious attention to attitudes and values of the young Nigeria. In support of the above view, Mkpa (2005) opines that the fact that Social Studies enjoys the recognition of a core subject at the categories of schools in Nigeria means that the subject is perceived as a very important and worthy of being studied by all categories students in Nigerian schools. This recognition accorded to Social Studies is derived from the potential of the subject for achieving certain desirable goals for general education in Nigeria. This relevance of Social Studies is geared towards producing skills which is lacking in our school graduates resulting in high rate of unemployment, bastardized work ethics and corruption in public and private sectors. The worst implication of chronic unemployment is the phenomena of jobless growth which Uzo (1995) describes as the tendency to discourage further investment in formal education and training. The functionality or effectiveness of Social Studies would help to ameliorate the deteriorating social ills through effective planning and resource management in classroom interaction that would equip the learners with life surviving skills. The thrust of this presentation simply put in to make Social Studies functional that is, meeting its laudable objectives.

The traditional approach to curriculum development in Social Studies in primary school was characterized by separate classroom instruction in the traditional subjects which deals with the study of man in his environment which makes it possible for distinctive lessons in history, religion, civics and geography to pass for Social Studies. This is because, Social Studies as a discipline in Nigeria’s educational system has over the years been subjected to variety of definitions, which in most cases have been, quiet restrictive in focus and content. For instance, Lawal and Oyeleye (2003) opine that majority of the earlier practitioners of the subject have defined it as amalgamation of Arts and Social Sciences in terms of History, Geography, Political Science and Sociology. The perception of the earlier practitioners of Social Studies have greatly influenced various professional backgrounds of the handling of the subject before now which have resulted to search of variety of definitions of the subject. This made the teachers to teach Social Studies as one week of history and another week of geography and so on. This implies that teachers who have this kind of perceptible teach the subject purely for knowledge acquisition, whereas the subject is supposed to be perceived as one that promotes the three domains of learning: cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and not only the cognitive aspect of the subject. This is a misconception of the discipline Social Studies, (Mezieobi, 1991).

Social studies should not be a discipline in which a teacher seizes opportunity to emphasize his or her own area of specialization at the expense of the real content of the subject. Supporting the above view, Lawal (1999) observes that, Social Studies is not a discipline in which academic selfishness is exhibited. This is true because, this single subject approach encouraged a negation of a wholistic view. It engendered a

compartmentalized and specialized view of knowledge in 'the minds of young children which is quite unnecessary'. No wonder, Taba (1967) is of the view that the molders Social Studies curriculum was developed to solve the problem created by the separate -subject prevalent approach in the primary school. The implementation of such a curriculum would be aimed at incorporating, integrating knowledge and inspiration from many realms of learning. The curriculum associated with this is aimed at creating a universe of inquiry, discourse and understanding among children of different backgrounds and aspirations, who as citizens of a free and democratic society are obliged to share certain responsibilities and problems.

In the Nigerian educational scene, these responsibilities and problems 'are succinctly summed under the Social Studies objectives which according to Dubey and Barth (1980) are meant to encourage and develop the following virtues among young children;

- a. Self confidence and initiative, power of imagination and resourcefulness;
- b. Desire for knowledge and continued learning;
- c. Sense of respect for and tolerance of the opinion of others;
- d. Social attitude and values such as cooperation, participation
- e. Honesty, open-mindedness, integrity, diligence and obedience.
- f. Spirit of national consciousness and patriotism.

These objectives are collectively aimed at producing young and effective citizens envisaged in the Nigerian policy on education.

II. Planning and the New Curriculum

The new curriculum package of the social studies is expected to provide the young learners with some insight into the use of various knowledge structure and processes that have relevance to modern civilization. Since Social Studies is intended to offer a curriculum which is both relevant and meaningful to a young learner's personal life, it should be organized according to the needs and problems of young people that demand personal social understand. Social studies is concerned with the production and propagation of knowledge as well as its utilization derived from a variety of discipline for the purpose of solving problem through various thought processes associated with decision making.

Researchers like Taba (1962), Pring (1974). Engle (1977) Okam (1990) noted that the teaching of an integrated curriculum represents a natural response to the shifting views of society with particular reference to the young learners. They also generally contended that environment and all its natural phenomena can best be understood in the context of a unified and wholistic approach to the curriculum. This new dimension calls for changes not only in content but most importantly on the methodology, hence the management of human and material resources to effect the change.

The concept of social studies as illustrated above could prove to be challenging responsibility for a teacher who is serious about his task or teaching. The modern society exists in a troubled world saturated with urban technological and industrial related problem. Every day there is sensational and disturbing headlines in the news media on stories of riots, strikes, embezzlement, drug related offences. Advance fes, Frated (419) ethnic rivalries, child abuse, modern slave-trade and other social vices as they reflect major social problems and changes of our time. According to Onugba (1977) Information age is also the age of knowledge while operating in a world that is now run by knowledge. In this way teacher in planning and implementing social studies instruction must respond to the needs of the changing world around them so that the relevance and functionality of the educational system will be embanked.

The community-based curriculum approach and pattern in social studies aims at linking the school with community content elements including culture, customs folktales, and tradition. In many instances, community-based curriculum addresses issues concerned with environmental studies that possess local relevance. This approach is essentially meant to combine education and work by bringing community people to work with school children in self help efforts or bringing the school to the community in order to transfers the affected villages. This transformation may create the need for people to accept willingly to respect the dignity of labour and other social virtues that can engender the development of the nation. Both the Social Studies teacher and his pupils are part of the human family that will be confronted with these realities in conjunction with the more pleasant aspects of human living such as our cultural heritage.

One of the outstanding characteristics of Social Studies curriculum is the emphases placed on how the effective citizen is to be educated and made functional. This is to be a generation of people who are not only intellectually capable but are practically oriented and be able to think for themselves. Therefore in the planning, there should be provision and opportunity created for teachers to encourage children to find out things for themselves through inquiry approach to instruction. Ogundare (1985) states that:

Although the acceptance of Social Studies as a medium for citizenship transmission has gained in Nigeria the following curriculum processes intrinsic to the teaching of social

studies have largely been relegated to the background in many classrooms. This includes methodology of inquiry and adoption of investigative oriented approaches, decision-making, critical thinking and problem solving, (Ogundare, 1985:2).

Teachers themselves must also be creative, resourceful and encourage scientific and effective thinking in the classroom. Schools should be associated with this development to give learners the opportunity to practice skills which will help them function effectively at school and in later life. One of the implications of the above is that the teaching and learning of social studies in our schools would lead to the preparation and production of the effective citizens required in the National Policy' on Education.

According to Okam (1996) the kind of Social Studies expected to be taught in Nigeria should aim at Nigerianizing the learner, it should ameliorate ethnocentrism and stimulate loyalty to the nation. It is the desire of the government of Nigeria that Nigeria should be a just, free and democratic society, it is to be a society with full, opportunities for all-its citizens and able to generate a dynamic economy. It is to be a society which is strong, united and self-reliant The values which will be taught as part of the instruction for the achievement of these objectives as specified in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) include:

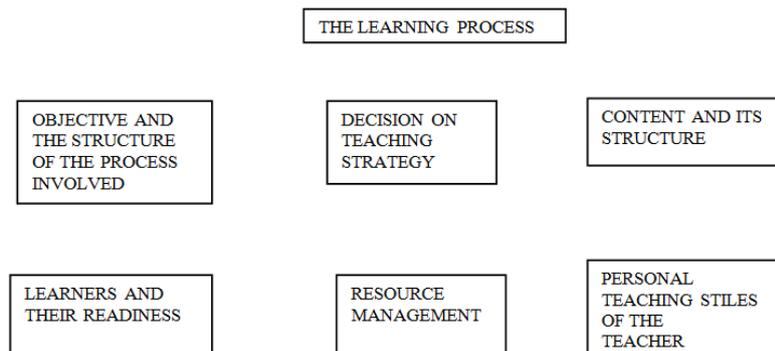
- i. Respect for the worth and dignity of individuals;
- ii. Faith in man's ability to make rational decision
- iii. Moral and spiritual values in interpersonal relations
- iv. Respect for the dignity of labour;
- v. Share responsibility for the common good of society; and.
- vi. Promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.

The foregoing national objectives are reminiscent of the Social Studies objectives for primary and post-primary education formulated and accepted during the workshop of Nigerian social studies educators held at Ibadan in 1971. These objectives demand that the teaching and learning of Social Studies should inculcate in the students a positive attitude to citizenship and desire in him to make a positive personal contribution to the creation of a united Nigeria. The other objectives from this center-piece of Social Studies education expected to develop in the students are self-confidence and initiative and a sense of respect and tolerance for others.

Dimension in Planning and Resource Management in Social Studies Instruction

The decision on how to teach the new social studies content as outlined in the new curriculum makes demand on the teacher. To meet such demands he must apply new dimensions in planning and resource management to ensure the attainment of appropriate Social Studies objectives earlier enumerated. The decision model suggested with help the teachers in deciding how to teach.

The Decision Model for Social Studies Instructions



Adopted from Taba (1967).

This model is influenced by many factors the first being the nature of the content and structure on social studies, if multiple behavioural objectives are addressed, then Use implied behaviour must be differentiated on appropriate strategy e.g aptitude cannot be taught in the same way location of mineral deposit, lesson would be handled. The learning process also influences the criteria for formulating teaching strategic Learner's abilities; cultural background and maturity level, are modifiers and determinants of the envisaged teaching strategy. These variations help the teacher to "determine various ways of motivating pupils on the optimum size of the steps in a sequence of learning task. This is more pronounced in handling topics of conceptualization, abstract and forms of knowledge that requires critical thinking. Other elements of the model Include the resource management (human and nonhuman) and teachers' personal, teaching styles. The

implication for this model's relevance and functionality calls for the teacher to apply his knowledge of child development, use multiple resources and meaningful variety of methods so as to maintain excellence. The social studies teachers are called to do more than ordinary teaching, for example molding the character of Nigerian children.

These processes of purification and human engineering will take a gradual but steady process through Social Studies education. Therefore the planning and implementation of social studies curriculum must be sound and effective. The fact that the Social Studies curriculum emphasizes the functional use of content from numerous curriculum packages implies that teachers must develop a sound application of planning and resource management technique in the area of the instructional methodologies. This exposition strongly holds the view that the teaching of Social Studies in schools and colleges must hinge on and exploit effective management strategies and channel them for the accomplishment of desired objectives. These objectives are aim at a wholistic development of the Nigerian child.

Meaningful variety in teaching can be a wide a range of teaching techniques that have been popularly categorized into presentation, action and interaction techniques. Action technique involves utilization of available resources (human and non-human) direct contact between the learner and ideas, materials and equipment as students carry out experiments, construction work, observation and practice of specific skills, interaction technique capitalizes on human desire to talk and share one's view, thoughts, opinions and exchange of ideas. This strategy affords the learners opportunity to experience teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interaction. The elements of such technique are questionnaire, interviewing, role-play, discussion, debate and the likes.

III. Conclusion

Many laudable educational initiatives have failed mainly because they did not take due account of the 'teacher factor'. Social Studies education should be made to meet the needs of the 21st century generation through stronger emphasis on communication skills, spirit of inquiry, and team-work, all geared towards achieving self-reliant, dynamic economy, interdependence and the spirit of unity among the citizens. Social Studies from multi-disciplinary approaches emphasize the functional use of instructional content from the social science. Its implication for teachers is that, teachers must develop a sound application or planning and management of resources (human and non-human). This would help to use effectively the epistemology of the subject matter for problem solving in classroom interaction. It is worth nothing that meaningful learning in Social Studies does not only involve more acquisition of cognitive knowledge but more importantly the effective domain. Perhaps this might explain why we are not achieving the justification for introducing Social Studies in our schools.

This paper strongly holds the view that the teaching of social studies in our schools hinges on the effective planning and management of instructional resources for the achievement of the national educational objectives. However, this arrangement is not an absolute remedy for positively maximizing the benefits derived from the efforts characterized in a teaching learning situation, rather it has the purpose of off-setting these forces which undermine purposeful collaboration on the part of the teacher and the learner.

IV. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher made the following recommendations.

1. That Nigeria government and Ministry of Education should provide enabling and conducive environment for academic activities that will cause the students to go beyond what the classroom teacher tells them in the class. Such enabling and conducive environment includes homework, well equipped school library, adequate classroom, qualified and competent teachers, and instructional materials among others.
2. That Social studies teacher should be familiar with and internalize the contents of Social Studies so as to interpret its contents and encourage its meaning.

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