

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL STUDIES TO ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES OF PROBLEM-SOLVING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper reports the findings of a study on how to strengthen Social Studies for greater achievement in problem solving. Twenty 300level Social Studies students from Federal College of Education, Kano responded to a questionnaire that has both rating scale and free-response parts (triangulation method). They rated the extent to which social studies objectives are being achieved, and the extent to which some objectives and contents are needed for achieving problem solving. They also supplied fresh objectives and contents of social studies for this purpose. Findings show that both the rated objectives and the ones supplied by the students converged that the objectives that have been highly achieved are: to create awareness and sensitivity to man's environment; to influence man's attitude positively to social, cultural, economic, political value and total environment; and to enable man acquire skills for solving societal and environmental problems. Additional objectives and contents to be included for achieving problem solving, are that leaners be made to understand their family background; be familiar with current trends militating against peace in Nigeria; be enlighten on social problems of prostitution, drug abuse, kidnapping and security matters. Based on the conclusion drawn, it is recommended that periodic review of social studies curriculum to capture current themes of importance to the society be made and that social studies teachers should also constantly review their instructional objectives, contents and materials to meet constant demands of society.

Keywords: Education, Problem Solving, Environment, Objectives.

Introduction

Social Studies deals with people's interaction in the environment and it is mostly concerned with their relationship with fellow human beings in the society. Human beings encounter diverse problems and challenges in their quest to live comfortably and more meaningful life. Social studies enable people to tackle these social challenges by educating them to adapt to the ever-changing environment, through the acquisition of functional skills, attitudes and values that will make them to be functional and effective citizens in the society. Because it is a problem-solving subject, there is the need for the objectives to include how to solve contemporary issues in the society. Therefore, this paper seeks to find out from the Social Studies pre-service teachers how the subject can

be made to focus more on achieving its objectives in the areas of problem-solving in Nigeria. Social studies has been defined by various writers; as a subject that is centered on problem solving and in providing young people with opportunities for nurturing the virtues of self-realization, self-discovery, national unity, social and political advancement, better human relationships as well as scientific and technological development. In addition, Social Studies is concerned with the study of people in the society, in space and in time and how they relate to one another and to the group to which they belong (Osakwe, 2010).

Social Studies education in Nigeria has a special task to perform in transforming Nigeria into a modern state. Moreover, Okam, (2012) portrays social studies as a curriculum instrument which could be tailored among other

functions towards employing civic education in bringing about the breaking down of barriers among societies for the purpose of increasing the opportunities for individuals and groups to be able to benefit from socio-economic privileges, benefits and asset which may be available to them as members of a given socio political framework. Therefore, social studies have its ultimate and immediate classroom objectives along these lines of thought.

The major importance of stating objectives in every human activity cannot be over emphasized. This is because stated objectives enable the choice of course of action easily and provides the basis of deleting and organizing instructional materials and different methodologies and also provide a guide for evaluating the effectiveness of a chosen teaching learning procedure (Bozimo and Ikwemelu, 2000). The general objectives of Social Studies as cited in Ogunsanya (1984) are as follows;

- i.** To create awareness and sensitivity to man's environment.
- ii.** To influence man's attitudes positively to social, cultural, economic, political value and the total environment.
- iii.** To enable man acquires skills for solving societal and environmental problems.
- iv.** To equip man with the basic knowledge and understanding of the total environment.

When we look at the general objectives of teaching Social Studies, as clearly stated above, some experts scored the level of achievement of most of them very low. The objectives of social studies have not really been achieved in Nigeria due to many social problems of today. In the words of Mezeobi (1993), the school is an instrument for societal problem resolution among others, however, the contemporary issues or problems of Nigeria are escalating particularly adolescent and adult delinquency, white collar criminality, ethnic discrimination and prejudice, teenage sexuality, drug abuse and crime of all dimensions. We cannot say that Social Studies objectives which are being used

as a means of problem solving have been achieved if we have these problems.

Another vital area which has cast doubt on achievement of Social Studies is the issue of insecurity. According to Borodo (2003), insecurity is traced to poverty which has many dimensions among which are poor access to public services, poor infrastructure, illiteracy, ignorance, poor health and social exclusion. Poverty can be fought through the introduction of adult literacy programme in which topics are carefully selected and implemented under the umbrella of social studies education.

It is also argued that many of the objectives of social studies have not been achieved in Nigeria, looking at the nature of the Nigerian child, as cited by Akinleye (1989) when he posited that; "The type of social, economic and political problems into which today's children grow are much complex in dimension than those of their predecessors born a few decades ago". The complexity of the problems requires more decisive actions. For example, the Nigerian child has to struggle amidst heterogeneity of more than two hundred (200) ethnic groups with each group trying to preserve its identity and value system. The Nigerian child has to struggle amidst various religious beliefs and other social orientations; amidst imbalance and other social vices such as corruption, greed, selfishness, dishonesty, neglect, etc. Many of the Social Studies objectives have not been achieved in Nigeria, most especially when we look at the current problems facing the country at large such as the issues of insecurity, kidnapping, rape, corruption, etc. The state of the nation was seen some years ago by the then President Olusegun Obasanjo at Jaji on Monday Sept, 12-1997 as "ours is still a place where people are prepared to destroy anything or cover up any crime, if doing so promote their economic interest and might." The story is still the same today, everywhere including the highest law-making institutions in the country there is corruption and open dishonesty. The social, economic, political and cultural ills are too many to be catalogued in a single write up. With all these types of problems, there is no way we can say

that Social Studies objectives that are concerned with problem-solving have been satisfactorily achieved in the Nigerian society.

Problem solving is a teaching learning method of any concept in Social Studies. It is a teaching/learning method in which students, either individually or in a group activity attempt knowledge, understand further difficult concepts and generalizations, problems or provides answers to problems suited to the attainment of instructional objectives with minimal guidance from the teacher. This method involves students selecting problem, related to the instructional objectives, the students asking questions, collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data that would help them solve the problem or achieve the instructional objectives as well as apply their findings or generalizations to novel situation.

Furthermore, Jaomilek (1977) defines problem solving as an attitude of curiosity, the ability to analyze a problem, the ability to make and set hypothesis and ability to use information in validating conclusion. In other words, problem solving involves the process of discovering a problem, thinking and collecting information, analyzing the information and finding solution to the problem.

The fundamental goal of Social Studies education in Nigeria is to equip an individual with positive knowledge, attitudes, values and adaptive interactive skills. The objectives of Social Studies education represent an interdisciplinary approach to the study of human beings or groups of interrelationships within both their physical and social environments. Social Studies education in Nigerian schools emphasizes students' familiarity with physical and social environment, improved social relationships and intentions, skills and abilities to think reflectively, critically, creatively and independently all of which are relevant to problem solving (Iyamu and Otete, 2006). The query is: how much of these objectives have been achieved? What else needed to be added in terms of objectives and contents of Social Studies to strengthen the achievement of its objectives of problem-solving? Previous studies have not focused on this aspect of Social Studies evaluation. This paper therefore

examines how to strengthen Social Studies for greater achievement in problem solving.

Research Questions

1. What is the assessment of pre-service Social Studies teachers on the achievement of social studies objectives?
2. What additional objectives are to be included to focus Social Studies on problem-solving?
3. What additional contents are to be included to focus Social Studies on problem-solving?
4. Is there any significant difference between the views of male and female pre-service Social Studies teachers towards strengthening social studies as a problem solving subject?

Methodology

Descriptive survey was the design adopted for the study. The population was all 300 level students of Social Studies at Federal College of Education, Kano. A sample of twenty (20) of them were selected using simple random sampling technique. They consisted, ten male, ten females. Seven of them came in with Teachers' Grade II while the remaining thirteen (13) entered with SSCE. Nine (9) were above 25 years while eleven (11) were below 25 years.

They responded to a questionnaire titled; "How Social Studies can be made to Achieve its Objectives of Problems-Solving in Nigeria." The questionnaire has four (4) parts: section A is on general information of the respondents (sex or gender). Section B asked the respondents to rate the extent to which social studies objectives are being achieved, on a scale that ranged between highly achieved, fairly achieved, scarcely achieved, hardly achieved, and not achieved. Section C requested participants to rate the extent to which some social studies objectives are needed for achieving problem solving, while section D also asked the participants to rate the extent to which some Social Studies contents/topics are needed for achieving problem solving. The questionnaire also requested the respondents to supply at least two objectives and two topics

they considered very essential in developing problem-solving skills in students. This is a triangulation method to view both the rated responses and free-choice supply of ideas. The questionnaire was validated by an expert in social studies. His suggestions were used to strengthen the instruments. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaires,

collected them back and scored them on a computer spread sheet.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the assessment of pre-service Social Studies teachers on the achievement of Social Studies objectives?

Table 1: Rank- Order of Pre-service Teachers’ Assessment of Achievement Social Studies Objectives

Rank	Social Studies Objectives	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1st	To create awareness and sensitivity to man’s environment	20	4	5	4.80	.410
2.nd	To influence man’s attitude positively to social, cultural, economic, political value and the total environment.	20	4	5	4.65	.489
3rd	To enable man acquires skills for solving societal and environmental problems.	20	2	5	4.30	.801
4th	To equip man with the basic knowledge and understanding of the total environment.	20	2	5	4.30	.801
5th	To develop power of creativity, resourcefulness, imagination and social awareness.	20	2	5	4.30	.865
6th	To inculcate appropriate skills and ability for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of this society.	20	2	5	4.25	.716
7th	To inculcate national consciousness and national unity.	20	3	5	4.25	.967
8th	To develop in an individual a positive attitude to citizenship and a desire in them to make a positive personal contribution to the creation of a united Nigeria.	20	2	5	4.15	1.04 0
9th	To educate young individuals in harmonious living and in an understanding of the different people who make up a society.	20	1	5	4.10	.788
10th	To generate people who can think for themselves and respect the views of others.	20	3	5	4.10	.968

From table 1 all the objectives are rated high in the achievement scale. But on ranking the objective which states that “to create awareness and sensitivity to man’s environment” has the highest mean score, The objective which says, “to influence man’s attitude positively to social, cultural, economic, political value and the total

environment, came second in position. The Objective which says; to acquire skills for solving societal and environmental problem” came third. The objectives that rank 8th, 9th and 10th came lowest in the order of achievement.

Research Question 2: What additional objectives needed to be included to focus Social Studies on problem solving?

Table 2: Objectives for Achieving Problems Solving

S/N	Objectives for Achieving Problem-Solving	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1.	To understand the family background of the learner.	20	2	5	4.55	.686
2.	To be familiar with current trends militating against the peace of Nigeria.	20	0	5	4.55	.759
3.	To enlighten younger generation about the effects of prostitution.	20	2	5	4.50	.607
4.	To know the effect of drug abuse.	20	2	5	4.50	1.000
5.	To enlighten about the effect of kidnapping problem in Nigeria.	20	1	5	4.25	.786
6.	To create awareness of necessary materials, and the security agents.	20	3	5	4.25	.851
7.	The youths should be taught about the need of self-employed, before they finish their studies. They should be taught not to depend on white colour jobs.	20	2	5	4.20	.696
8.	To include the effects of religious disturbances in the social studies objectives which will help in problem solving in Nigeria.	20	1	5	4.00	1.124
9.	The youth should be educated about the need of working hard, and the authority concerned should make provision for.	20	3	5	3.60	1.603
10.	Road accident and its effects should be included in the objectives of social studies so that our roads will be accidents free.	20	0	5	3.35	1.814

From table 2, not all the objectives are rated highly in the order of need. Objective No.1 which states that there is the need to teach family background of the learner in Social Studies has the highest mean score from the respondents with a mean score of 4.55 with a deviation of 686. The table also shows that current trend militating against the peace of Nigeria should be included in the objective of social studies. It has the mean of 4.55 with a standard deviation of 759. Objectives 9 and 10

ranked lowest. The standard deviation in each objective implies that there are varied responses on each objective, while some rated the same objective as high as 5 (the maximum), some rated it as low as one or zone.

Research Question 3: What additional contents needed to be included to focus Social Studies problem solving?

Table 3: Topics for Achieving Problem Solving

S/N	Objectives for Achieving Problem-Solving	N	Min	Max	Mean	S D
1.	Prostitution	20	0	5	4.70	.470
2.	Drug Abuse	20	2	5	4.15	.875
3.	Kidnapping	20	0	5	4.10	.852
4.	Corruption	20	0	5	3.95	1.468
5.	Insecurity	20	4	5	3.90	1.373
6.	Unemployment	20	2	5	3.70	1.302
7.	Religious disturbance in Nigeria	20	1	5	3.70	1.418
8.	Effects of Early marriage	20	0	5	3.70	1.593
9.	Poverty	20	0	5	3.45	1.395
10.	Causes of road accident in Nigeria	20	0	5	2.85	2.159

The summary of analysis of data with regards to research question three was presented on Table 3. Students’ response to topic No.1 was very high in which they feel it is strongly needed to include the topic prostitution, in Social Studies for achieving problem solving, while the other participants feel topic No.2, (drug abuse) is needed in the content of social studies for achieving problem solving. Again, students’ responses to topic No.3 (kidnapping) was fairly needed. The standard deviation at each level implies that they have varied level of

responses. Road accidents, poverty and effects of early marriage are rated low, for inclusion in social studies contents.

Research Question 4: Is there any significant difference between the assessment of male and female pre-service social studies teachers towards strengthening Social Studies as a problem solving subject?

Table 4: t-test analysis of male and female responses.

SOS objective and context	Group	N	X	SD	T	Df	Sig.
Achieved objectives	M	10	44.80	4.02	2.11	18	0.048
	F	10	41.60	2.59			
Objectives to be included	M	10	43.50	5.28	1.744	18	0.098
	F	10	40.00	3.53			
Contents to be included	M	10	38.40	6.31	0.170	18	0.867
	F	10	38.00	3.9			

Table 4 shows that on the level of achievement of Social Studies objective there is a slight difference between the ratings of male and

female respondent. However, on the objectives to be included as well as social studies contents to be added there are no significant difference

between male and female. ratings. In all it can be safely concluded that there is unanimity among the respondent irrespective of gender on strengthening Social Studies for problem-solving.

Discussion of Finding

With respect to the objectives of Social Studies that have been achieved, findings show that both the rated objectives and the ones supplied by the students converged that some objectives of Social Studies have been highly achieved. The objectives that have been highly achieved are; to create awareness and sensitivity to man's environment; to influence man's attitude positively to social, cultural, economic, political value and total environment; and to enable man acquire skills for solving societal and environmental problems. This can be explained from the general observations that the citizens have become more aware of their environment, and civic responsibilities. More citizens now make comments on their environments, and participate in measures to reduce pollution on environmental days. The citizens have now become aware about the effects of living in a dirty environment, whereby they have now become aware of how to live in a clean and healthy environment. The rest objectives such as creativity, resourcefulness, skills and ability to live harmoniously in a plural society, and high-level thinking are gradually coming up in the rank of achievement. This is explainable from the level of unity in Nigeria, from the spate of religious crises and low level of entrepreneurial level of the youth. With respect to additional objectives to be included for achieving problem solving, the respondents were unanimous in their ratings that learners be made to understand their family background; be familiar with current trends militating against peace in Nigeria; be enlighten on social problems of prostitution, drug abuse, kidnapping and insecurity matters. These suggestions are borne out of contemporary issues in Nigeria and many of which were not envisaged in the current Social Studies objectives. Arising from the suggested additional objectives of Social Studies, it is not unexpected that contents to be included are mainly contemporary issue such as prostitution,

drug abuse, kidnapping, security, corruption, religious harmony etc. This is to make Social Studies relevant at every given time as Kissock (1981) and Ogundare (2017) have emphasized.

Concluding Remarks

This study has revealed some of the objectives of Social Studies that are being highly achieved and those that are up-coming. Fresh objectives and contents of Social Studies to be considered are also raised. Accordingly, the following recommendations are pertinent:

- ✓ Constant periodic review of Social Studies curriculum to capture current themes of importance to the society.
- ✓ Social Studies teachers should also constantly review their instructional objectives, contents and materials to meet the demands of the day.
- ✓ Teachers should make provision for taking students out on field trips, this will enable the students to find out facts about the current issues of concern to them and to the nation.
- ✓ Teachers should make use of inquiring method approach while teaching in the classroom, this will enable the students to have deep thinking towards achieving the stated objectives in connection with problem-solving.

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