
**TOWARDS EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF
SOCIAL STUDIES IN THE UNIVERSAL BASIC
EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study explores the effective teaching and learning of Social Studies in the Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria. Particular attention is accorded to Social Studies as a core subject in junior secondary by the National Policy on Education to enable the subject to inculcate in the learner, basic skills, values and attitudes for useful living. The paper further discussed the challenges posed by the restructuring of the curriculum and the collapse of the subjects Social Studies, Civic Education, and Security Education as themes under Religion and National Values among others. The paper considered the modern approach to the teaching and learning of Social Studies and placed emphasis on the integrated and entrepreneurial approaches to the teaching and learning of Social Studies in the Universal Basic Education Programme. Most importantly, it is believed that if the teaching and learning of Social Studies in the Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria is properly implemented the objectives of Social Studies will be fully realised.

Keywords: Universal Basic Education, Social Studies, Effective teaching and learning.

Introduction

The Federal Government of Nigeria through the National Policy on Education (2004) posited that every child has the right to acquire basic education, irrespective of any disability. According to this policy, the educational opportunity was made equal so that any individual, regardless of their socio-economic background or deformity, can have access to education. The school is expected to provide vocational training and prepare citizens for their livelihood. The school is also expected to introduce them to literally and fine arts, as well as develop their interest and skills to engage in recreational activities. This was why the country made its policy on education revolve around the philosophy and goals of the nation. Today the philosophy of education has not changed.

In 1999, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) was introduced as a policy reform measure of the Federal Government of Nigeria. Its aim was to correct the problems of the basic education system. The policy provided for basic education up to age 15, as well as adult and non-formal education including education of the marginalized groups within the Nigerian society (Ejere, 2011). The National Policy on Education, 2004 section 3 defines Basic Education as a type of education comprising 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary school. The policy stipulates that education shall be free and compulsory. This scheme shall include adult and non-formal educational programmes at primary and junior secondary school levels for both adults and out-of-school youths. The UBE has three main components universal, basic and education. Universal here means the programme is for everyone irrespective of tribe, culture or race and class (Aluede, 2006; Eddy & Akpan, 2009).

In order to achieve its objective, the junior secondary school was made an autonomous body, not having much to do with the senior secondary school rather being a continuation of primary education. The junior secondary schools now had desk officers teaching and non-teaching staff to manage the system. Five core subjects were emphasised with Social Studies included. Since the basic objective of Social Studies was to guarantee citizenship

education and also to shape the mind of the Nigerian child towards problem-solving, content in Social Studies needs to be restructured to meet high cognitive skills that allowed for self-development and continuous learning that improves the Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills. This will in turn require a new approach towards teaching and learning of Social Studies in primary and secondary schools.

A major development established by Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in the National Policy on Education is the pride of place it has given to the Social Studies curriculum. The Policy regards Social Studies as a compulsory core subject which all students in secondary schools cannot dispense with, in their learning activities. Very importantly, the Policy stipulates that the teaching of Social Studies curriculum in our secondary schools must be seen as one of those avenues of establishing strong bases for the propagation of effective citizens and forming a cohesive society that will support a notion of nation-building.

In all human societies, particularly the modern ones, education remains one of the most powerful instruments for both the development of man and transformation of the human society. However, the ability of education to achieve the objective of mankind development depends entirely on the government policies and the political will on the part of the government to translate the policies into meaningful actions. In Nigeria, like other countries in the world, efforts are often made to shape the direction and dimension of the educational system for capacity building through articulated policy. Unfortunately, most policies formulated in Nigeria are scarcely implemented. A lot never leaves the drawing board and the ones that have been launched are most often poorly implemented. With the introduction of the Universal Basic Education programme, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) was left with a choice to review, re-structure and re-aligned the existing primary and Junior Secondary School (JSS) curriculum into a 9-year Basic Education Programme.

In 2006, the NERDC produced the 9-year Basic Education curriculum which covered current and emerging issues like value reorientation, peace and dialogue, including human rights

education, family life and HIV/AIDS education, etc. (NERDC, 2007). In the light of this, a new basic education Social Studies curriculum was developed. However, the conventional rote learning method used in our schools cannot develop in the learners the values, attitudes and skills required by the UBE programme. Also, since facilities are not available, methods that improve Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills are unrealisable. To worsen it all, the application of free and compulsory education remains the greatest challenge to the programme. With the poor learning facilities students/teachers' ratio have increased to 200:1 and in some cases 300:1. This has seriously hindered the effective teaching and learning of Social Studies in this scheme. This is why this paper explored the teaching and learning of Social Studies in the Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria.

Challenges of Effective Teaching/Learning of Social Studies

The Federal Government of Nigeria through the National Policy on Education (2004) made Social Studies a core subject in junior secondary schools in Nigeria. The policy also emphasised as part of its objectives, inculcating in the learner, basic skills, values, and attitudes for useful living. This also agrees with the objectives and goals of the UBE programme at the junior secondary school level. Emphatically, the effective implementation of the UBE in junior secondary school through Social Studies instruction is inarguably dependent on effective teaching and learning of Social Studies. The success of the UBE scheme to a large extent will depend on, attitudes, values, and skills expected to be injected into the learner from effective teaching of Social Studies.

Unfortunately, the teaching of Social Studies in the past has not been very encouraging. Social Studies teachers rely completely on the traditional teacher-centred expository method of instructional delivery. Okobia (2009) pointed out that in South-West and South-South activity/interactional problem-solving methods were scarcely used in classroom instruction. However, most Social Studies teachers are not effectively informed on methods and skills adequate enough

to sustain this objective. Nworgu (2007) and Ibiam (2007) in their separate studies established that most Social Studies teachers are not well-informed on the demands, implications, and objectives of education reforms in Nigeria, specifically the UBE. This ignorance will likely affect the quality of learning.

In addition to this is the changes in the curriculum of Social Studies over the years, as noted by Okobia (2015) Social Studies and Civic Education became separate subjects to be taught by Social Studies teachers in both the nine years of basic education and Civic Education in the senior secondary, also the restructuring of education curricula and the various reductions in the number of subjects offered at the lower basic level with particular attention to Religion and National Values in which Social Studies teachers would be expected to teach Social Studies, Civic Education and Security Education.

Adamechi and Romaine (2000) and Ukeje (2000) in separate studies also agreed to the fact that the UBE in junior secondary schools is a practical way of achieving Social Studies objectives by equipping the learner with practical, creative skills, values, and ingenuity to become a functional member of the society. Nwazuo (2007) explained further that this is achievable when the Social Studies teachers integrate creativity process in the classroom instruction, as a means of encouraging and strengthening the thought processes of the learners in thinking reflectively about their personal and national problems. This calls for training and retraining of Social Studies teachers on the new policy as well as effective methods of imparting knowledge and skills. Afe (2003) points out that teacher quality and effectiveness is imperative for realistic implementation of UBE in Nigeria.

Mezieobi and Osakwe (2003), Esu and Inyang-Abia (2004), and Mezieobi (2007) suggested entrepreneurial and creative skills for productive living as a means of equipping learners with attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills for functional living in the Nigerian society. It is therefore imperative that effective implementation of Social Studies instruction will include practical and vocational ideas. In essence, Social Studies instruction ought to be innovative in exposing the learner to discover knowledge, create ideas, and think

scientifically. Ukadike and Iyamu (2007) reported that Social Studies teachers are yet to be equipped with these ideals. This will in turn influence methods of delivering Social Studies content and consequently affect learner's perception, values, attitudes, and skills in Social Studies curriculum.

The quality of the Social Studies teachers and the effectiveness of their instructional strategies in the classroom will go a long way in affecting the successful implementation of the UBE programme. Against this background, Ibiam (2007) postulates that rapid technological innovation in society has rendered most instructional materials in Social Studies obsolete. If the teacher is not resourceful enough to embrace technological change he will not be able to meet with the dynamics of the present-day challenges. Furthermore, Maduwesi (2001) and Ibiam (2007) observed that educational innovations are not instantly integrated into school curricula at all levels in Nigeria. Obuh (2007) discovered that Social Studies teachers have not demonstrated high competence in the use of ICTs (Information and Communication Technology) in the teaching of Social Studies.

Integrated Approach to Teaching of Social Studies

It should be noted that there is no single strategy that can be applied to the teaching concept and principles of Social Studies. This study adopts Theoretical Underpinnings of Teaching Social Studies through the Integrated Approach. The word integration means the act of combining two or more things to work together. In Social Studies, integration refers to the linking of related subjects, facts, concepts and knowledge while teaching and learning. During the Mombasa conference in 1968, it was observed that the traditional separate subjects' approach to teaching; a heritage from the colonial past was not encouraging the citizens to identify themselves with their own historical, geographical and political traditions. The general feeling was to integrate the traditional subjects like History, Civics and Geography to which must be added elements of anthropology, economics and sociology that would also involve physical and manual activities. The integrated approach was

recommended because of the growing dissatisfaction with courses provided under the separate subjects that alienated African students from their traditional culture and made them ashamed of their heritage. Furthermore, the integrated approach is in line with African indigenous education as observed by (Mugimu & Nakabugo, 2009). This approach is illustrated thus:

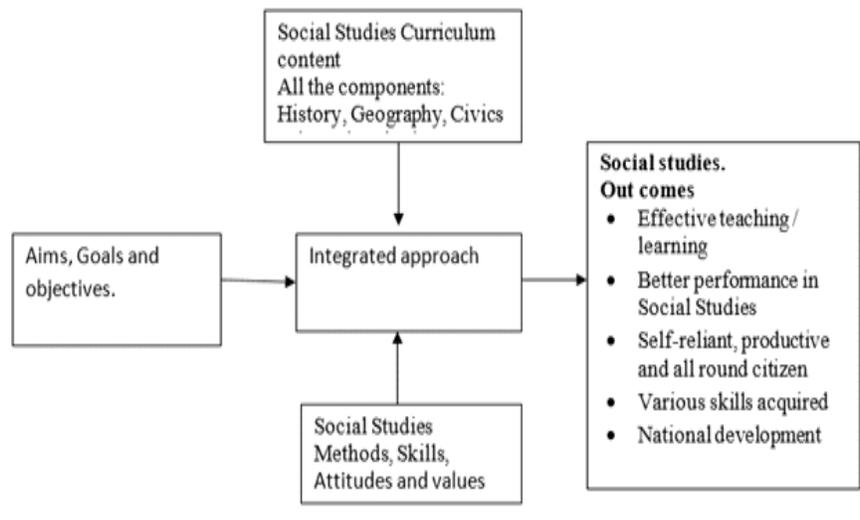


Figure 1: Integrated Approach to Teaching of Social Studies

Source: (Researcher, 2022)

The National Teachers Institute (NTI) and Teachers Education Sub-Sahara Africa (2012) also suggest an integrated approach which is a combination of simulation, laboratory, inquiry, project, demonstration, question and answer, field trip and discussion methods. according to them, these approaches entail a complete movement away from the behaviourist approach such as lecture methods, note copying and dictations where the learner is given content to memorise and regurgitate, to a constructive instructional model where the learner are required to produce and use knowledge. The new approach is learner centred. The learner is not treated as an empty vessel. S(h)e is credited with knowledge, skill, and attitude from the day he or she is born. This skill requires

development through guidance, encouragement and motivation. This makes the teachers role shift from that of imparting knowledge to that of a facilitator.

Edor (2013) suggests entrepreneurial approach for incorporating entrepreneurship skills into Social Studies education curriculum with the views to attaining job creation, and to enhance youth empowerment. He assumed that Nigeria has the highest rate of poverty, unemployment, corruption, among other social problems that need to be addressed. These socio-economic problems need to be solved using different strategies for solving them. It is due to these, that he suggested the use of entrepreneurship approach in the teaching and learning of Social Studies. He believes that this approach will help fight those anti-social problems which will go a long way in enhancing youth empowerment and serve a complementary role in creating job opportunities to support the Federal Government. Adding that issues of poverty, unemployment, corruption and so on will be a thing of the past.

In addition to entrepreneurial approach, Onyilofor, (2010) also suggests the vocational approach. According to him, entrepreneurial education is not vocational education. However, the vocational education skills are incorporated in the innovation expectation of an entrepreneurial-minded work force. Entrepreneurship education is education that prepares the students of Social Studies to have a great positive mind-set, positive self-efficacy, mind-set that is creative, productive self-reliance and to have a sharp focus to earn more for themselves and the society at large.

Social Studies teaching has remained teacher-centred and does not allow integrative methods of practical, active learning, and this could be the source of ineffective teaching of Social Studies in our institutions. Integrated knowledge helps learners to make effective decisions about problems of living. It recognizes knowledge which focuses on the development of effective and productive citizenship. Integration also enables learners to look at the world as an integrated whole. The importance of the integrated approach demands integrating broad bodies of knowledge in a coherent and meaningful manner. For meaningful integration, Social Studies teachers must think critically to find more facts, ideas, information

and plan the material to be taught in a logical manner. However, all these should be relevant and appropriate. Where ideas are not relevant, integration is not possible. Social Studies teachers must understand how, when and what to integrate otherwise, they may find themselves teaching separate subjects instead of Social Studies and this is the beginning of ineffective teaching which this study intended to correct. Integration cannot be done for the sake of it. It must be possible, purposeful and relevant to enable learners understand things and issues better.

Generally, Social Studies teachers need to understand that effective integration calls for linking and utilizing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values from different learning experiences enhanced by various techniques, instructional materials and time schedules in the teaching-learning situation. Integration deals with knowledge as a whole. It structures the content in a sequential pattern from known to unknown, as learner's progress from one level to the next. A topic, theme or concept is used, a relationship is made based on various subjects and the content is put together in a way that makes sense to learners. When applying the integrated approach, the teacher should use various techniques, methods and strategies, relevant ideas, facts and opinions from other subjects to explain his points, use variety of teaching aids, local environment and resource person, involving children in practical activities and develop the necessary behaviours, attitudes, skills and values among learners. However, all these are fundamentally transferred and linked to reflect integration, multi-media presentation, interdisciplinary, participatory active learning, and use of learners' environment, development of skills knowledge, attitudes and values.

Conclusion

The policy of Universal Basic Education is not entirely new. The Social Studies teachers need to be effectively informed on methods and skills of a modern approach in the teaching and learning of Social Studies in Universal Basic Education programme which includes the proper application of the integrated and entrepreneurial approaches that will help to fight anti-social problems and focus on the development of effective and productive citizenship.

Way Forward

The issue of funding should be looked into properly. Whatever allocation is given to education should be monitored to prevent embezzlement. And the teachers should be promptly and well paid as this will motivate them to be more dedicated to their duties. The government should prepare for the recruitment and training of more qualified teachers in Nigeria. In this regard, the Colleges of Education as well as Faculties of Education in the Universities should wake up to their responsibilities in giving adequate and qualitative training to prospective teachers. Finally, the Ministries of Education in collaboration with the State Universal Basic Education Boards must be empowered to carry out their responsibilities. Schools should be monitored regularly, not to witch hunt, but to ensure that the teachers are performing as expected of them.

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