

THE RELEVANCE OF ACTION ORIENTED METHODOLOGIES IN SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

The paper emphasizes the need for enhancing teaching-learning interaction by adopting the action-oriented, learner – centred methods in the Nigerian educational system. The paper examines the meaning of action-oriented methods and the state of Social Studies teaching/learning processes in Nigerian schools. The paper also focuses on the relevance of action-oriented methodologies in Social Studies education for quality assurance in education. Conclusion and recommendations are made.

The educational system in Nigeria is the architect of the enlightenment that has constituted myriad of problems to the environment. This is a direct reference to the final product of our educational system. It then implies that the situation could return to normal if the avenues necessary for ensuring the expected good quality output from the system are explored. One major way of achieving this is by producing generation of teachers who would be well equipped with the right type of knowledge, attitudes and skills in arresting the learner's interest by making him an active participant in the teaching learning process in the school. A learner who learns by doing will always find what to do in the larger society for his own good and that of the society in which he lives, hence quality assurance in education is being developed. Therefore this paper looks at the relevance of action-oriented methods in Social Studies education for quality assurance in education.

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The Meaning of Action-Oriented Methodologies

This is an approach to teaching/learning processes in which the learner, as the central focus and major determinant of the subject-matter and learning experiences to be provided; gets actively involved for at least 50% of the lesson period. In such situations, the teacher acts as a facilitator who may introduce the lesson for the day and then allows the learners to carry out the bulk of the work themselves (Mkpa, 2003). In this direction, Mezieobi (1994:14) suggested that the action-oriented methods could be carried out through a good number of techniques and methods including: (a) Discussion in small groups or whole class group (b) Simulation (c) Role play (d) Dramatization (e) Field trip or excursion (f) Mock trials (g) Questioning (h) Dalton plan (i) Inquiry and (j) project methods.

Each of these mentioned above qualifies for a technique in the action-oriented teaching method because they emphasize activity and involve the learner in one form of action or activity. A teacher who is well educated in the use of action-oriented methods will always find it convenient to use any of these methods/techniques at any particular point depending on the subject matter and the level he has in view.

For instance, discussion, field trip/excursion, project, inquiry and questioning techniques could be convenient for the students in tertiary institutions, though they also must be exposed to the technicalities of using the rest of the techniques in their preparation to meet the younger learners in the primary and secondary schools.

The State of Social Studies Teaching/Learning Processes in Nigerian Schools

Almost all teachers in the primary and secondary schools in the country are still very much involved in their long-standing practice of teacher-centered, role learning and memorization methods. We live in an era of advanced technologies, which consequently exposes the learner to objects requiring manipulation and activity, even from a very tender age as they play around with toys. Hence, a learning situation in which he is forced to be a passive recipient of knowledge would rather turn out to be too dull and boring for him. Most importantly, a learner who is denied the opportunity of being actively involved in the teaching/ learning processes would definitely not be able to acquire sufficient practical experiential competencies that would enable him to fit into the fast changing society and thereby not be able to acquire quality assurance education.

Several scholarly reports and researches have noted with grave concern the classroom malfunctioning of school subjects including Social Studies education in Nigerian schools. This unwholesome situation in Social Studies teaching have prevented the attainment of outlined goals. For instance, Goof and Okam (1990) in a study noted that copying of laborious notes and memorization of simple unrelated facts characterized most Social Studies classes or lessons. This was attributed to the traditional chalk-talk approach adopted by teachers during instructions. Similarly, Kadiri and Aliju (1992) reported that questions asked and exercises given to learners which required no serious thoughts were far from developing needed attitudes and actions emphasized in the subject. They further observed that Social Studies teachers do not apply the inquiry method central in the teaching of Social Studies. Further more, Ololobou (1994) in a survey of class-room practices in social Studies education in junior secondary schools in Kano municipality reported a great divergence between what Social Studies expected and the actual actions taken in the classroom. Over 80% of the teachers in the survey affirmed that they know they were to teach Social Studies using the inquiry method yet the approach is ignored in the actual delivery of instruction. There was a further observed non-challenge and ineptitude among the Social Studies teachers.

In another study by Falayajo (1997) focusing on subjects liked best by primary schools pupils, Social Studies was ranked among the least. The subject was described generally as dull, boring and uninteresting. The basic reason given for this state of affair was the teacher factor.

Most of the teachers lacked enthusiasm and never portrayed the utilitarian value of Social Studies to life after schooling. Thus, even though Social Studies is organized to provide learners with insight into the use of various knowledge structures and processes relevant to living, its teaching fell short of the functionality principle (Okam, 2002). The process of enquiring, decision-making processes, critical thinking and problem-solving are all relegated to the background. Thus, the positive social orientation to citizenship to aid quality assurance in education is almost defeated. Also, Okam (2002) noted that Social Studies is not functioning adequately because of the low level of citizenship education to which learners are exposed in its teaching. The nation indeed is not succeeding in providing the solid foundation in schools in forging a stable and cohesive society to support nation building. The teachers' wrong use of teaching approach is a major source of the ills against the functional dispensation of Social Studies education for quality assurance in education. It is in the light of this that urgent steps need to be taken to recreate Social Studies education in the area of its methodology so as to achieve its noble goals for quality assurance in education.

The Relevance of Action-Oriented Methodologies in Social Studies Education for Quality Assurance in Education

Content materials in Social Studies are presented through the use of appropriate teaching procedures so as to achieve quality assurance in education. Action-oriented techniques conceive teaching as a joint venture between teachers and learners. They directly involve the learners with materials, objects and equipments to experiment, construct, observe, practice skills, and understand an abstract principle in greater depth in such a way that they take responsibility for their own learning. The use of action-oriented methodologies in the teaching and learning of Social Studies will enable the learners to acquire skills of information location data gathering and analysis, so as to make inference and draw conclusions. They should also embark on projects, surveys, interviews, guided observations, inquiry, experiments and organized study trips that focus on problems in the society. When all these are done, quality assurance in education will be achieved by the learners that will lead to the educational development of a nation.

The adaptation of action-oriented methodologies in the teaching and learning of Social Studies will change the role of the teacher from being an authoritative source of information to that of being a guide initiator, adviser, director and motivator of learning activities. On the part of the learners they will get actively engaged in the instructional process interacting with one another and the environment. The result is that the learners will develop their potentialities, the spirit of perseverance, and work towards making the most rational decisions among competing alternatives. This being the case, quality assurance in education is achieved by the learners for the educational development of the country.

Quality assurance in education can be achieved by the learners when action-oriented methods are used in instructional process in Social Studies education that will help to develop in the life of the learners the following areas;

- (i) Self-realization
- (ii) Improved human relations
- (iii) Economic recovery
- (iv) Civic responsibility

In the area of self-realization, the use of action-oriented methods in the teaching and learning of Social Studies give room for experiences that bring about personal growth. The learner develops the inquiring mind through a consideration of vital issues and problems involving man as he relates with his physical and social environment. Through this teaching approach, opportunities are provided for learners to develop, use and strengthen group work skills, intellectual skills, communication skills, study skills in dealing with the problems of concern to group life. The use of these skills will help to meet individual needs thus helping the learners to improve their competencies in individual and group enterprises. Self-direction, co-operation, responsibility and similar other behaviours encouraged through the use of such teaching approaches, help the learners increase their personal effectiveness in living and working with others. The end product of this kind of education is preparation of the learners for life in society by being patriotic, self-reliant and productive, thereby achieving quality assurance in education.

Quality assurance in education can be achieved through the use of action-oriented methods in the teaching and learning of Social Studies thereby bringing about improved human relations. The use of action-oriented methods require learners to work in groups to achieve a common purpose thus teaching interdependence among members and parts of the society. Respect of other views, courtesy, appreciation of home and family ideas, and community living are emphasized as the group approach is adopted in carrying out investigations. Democratic values and ways of working together characterize group processes in the use of action-oriented approaches. These experiences acquired in Social Studies instructional process are translated into practical living by learners to encourage warm human relationship, co-operative community living and national and political stability paving way for productivity in all facets of national life – hence quality assurance in education is assured.

Action-oriented teaching methods facilitate economic-efficiency in learners thereby bringing about quality assurance in education. This is because they provide experiences that build attitudes, understanding and skills essential for effective workmanship. Effective work habits, study skills and perseverance are emphasized in carrying out individual and group responsibilities. Attention is given through group planning on the requirements of various tasks, ways of achieving them and the role each individual would play in accomplishing responsibilities. In the use of this teaching methods, room is not created for any one to be a passenger because each has been assigned task that must be accomplished and sometimes even defeated using certified data. Furthermore, the community becomes a living resource centre and laboratory for various kind of experimentation such that learners study various groups, appreciate the work of those in the community and contributions they make to productive living. As the learners grow and mature, they become familiar with problems, needs and aspirations of the community. They also develop the needed background information on the economic activities, problems of production, distribution and consumption so that they can become competent workers at home, community and nation (Michealis, 1964).

Social Studies education is for the production of an effective citizenry for quality assurance in education. These entail citizens who are informed and can make reasoned and national decisions, willing to defend and even pay the supreme price. The use of action-oriented methodologies provide opportunities for learners to work as responsible members of groups to achieve group purposes and it is a basic fundamental aspect of growth in civic responsibilities. In addition, appreciating the opinion of others, upholding group standards, loyalty to democratic ideals, working to shape the behaviours of learners for adult role in society, will help to foster quality assurance in education in Nigeria.

However several obstacles exist within the school system that may pose threat in achieving these. They include: rigidity of the school time-table, inadequate facilities and resources, unprofessional altitude of some Social Studies teachers.

Conclusion

Quality assurance in education is the foundation and most basic tool for any nation desirous to produce patriotic, self-reliant and productive citizens. When the human resources are developed through Social Studies education to think and act critically and creatively, the stage would have been set for a stable and virile society. Teaching to elicit curiosity, interest, attention and scientific attitudes require the use of action-oriented methodologies that help to bring about quality assurance in education. The use of such approaches will lead to learners making discoveries and inventions that will benefit them and society. Although the processes involved in the use of these methodologies may be demanding, the benefits to be derived is worth all the efforts.

Recommendations

1. Social Studies should be encouraged to use action-oriented methods through the provision of materials and resources.
2. Since the orientation of the social science discipline is different from Social Studies, teachers trained in those disciplines should not be allowed to handle classroom delivery of Social Studies.
3. Teacher training institutions should endeavour to provide qualitative training for teachers of social studies to improve their efficiency.
4. There is need to relax the school time-table to create room for learners to carry out investigations and experiments.
5. Assessment procedures should lean towards less formal techniques which are progressive, continuous and guidance oriented. This is to prevent the teacher rushing through the syllabus adopting transmission approaches.

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