

LEADING CONSTRAINTS TO THE REALIZATION OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING OBJECTIVES IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

After Nigeria gained independence in 1960, there arose the need for the effective and meaningful citizenship, intellectual, value and civic education for the children and the youths of Nigeria. This need gave rise to the development and inclusion of Social Studies Curriculum in the Nigeria's education programme. So many objectives were formulated for the new curriculum and all attempted to focus on the socio-cultural needs of the society. However, the programme when well-examined shows that it has not been able to bring about the needed change that is required in the society due to some constraints in its teaching. This paper examines the laudable objectives of social studies in the school programme. Attempts were also made to examine the constraints to the realization of the teaching objectives. Suggestions on how to overcome the constraints were also made.

Social Studies as a subject in Nigeria context was introduced into the school system with the aim of addressing some society ills, and to foster national unity. The historical and cultural background of Social Studies education in Nigeria schools provides an insight into the socio-political and socio-cultural factors that informed the high premium placed on its teaching in the schools. (Iyamu, 1999).

At the beginning, there were different opinions on the conceptualization of Social Studies. It was viewed as in term of citizenship education value intellectual and humanistic education (Osakwe 1993).

Adaralegbe (1980), 1986) sees Social Studies in Nigerian schools as the totality of man experiences in the society. He went further to state that Social Studies is a problem solving approach discipline. In this regard Social Studies is concerns with solving the socio-cultural problems that abound in the society. The solving of the societal problems and the concern for the socio-culture of the society prompted the various objectives for the schools to promote and inculcate through the teaching of the subject in the Nigerian school system.

At this juncture, it is important to look at the some of the objectives of Social Studies in the school system.

The Objectives of Social Studies in Nigerian Schools

The Nigerian Educational Research Development Centre spelt out the following as the objectives of Social Studies in Nigerian Schools:

1. Create an increasing awareness and understanding of the evolving social and physical environments as a whole in its natural man-made, culture and spiritual resources for national development;
2. Develop in the child a capacity to learn and acquire certain basic skills including not only those of speaking, listening, reading and writing and calculation, but also the skills of hand, together with the skills of observation, analysis and inference which are essential to forming of sound judgment.
3. Ensure the acquisition of that relevant knowledge which is an essential pre-

- requisite to personal development of mankind;
4. Develop a systematic appreciation of diversity and interdependence of members of the local community and the wider national and international community;
 5. Develop in children a positive attitude to citizenship and a desire in them to make a positive personal contribution to the creation of United Nigeria (Osunde, 1989).
Mezieobi, (1992) also identified the following Social Studies objectives.
 6. The inculcation of the right type of values, habits and attitudes that make the individuals acceptable members of the society or social group;
 7. Helping the youths to appreciate the need to be tolerant and have respect for other people's views;
 8. Developing in the youth, a feeling of sympathy for their fellow human beings, especially the less privileged ones;
 9. Develop the spirit of oneness and realization that man's life is only meaningful through interdependence and co-operation;
 10. Develop in the youth a sense of responsibility and responsiveness;
 11. Develop the ability to think independently and reflectively and come to objective conclusion;
 12. Cultivate in the youth the spirit of patriotism; and
 13. Cultivate the attribute of "HOOD" honesty, obedience, orderliness and Diligence.

The above objectives identified were formulated not just for the individual to fit well into the society, but also to live, participate and contribute to the development of the society. The objectives to greater extent reflect the social

realities of the Nigerian society. They were expected to make the individual to become responsible and functional citizen of the country. However, it is sad to note that the aforementioned objectives are hardly achieved. The reasons for this is not far fetch, these are discussed below:

Constraints to the Realization of the Teaching Objectives of Social Studies in Nigeria

The realization of the teaching objectives of Social Studies in Nigeria is faced with many constraints. The following are some of constraints to the realization of the Teaching objectives of Social Studies in Nigeria.

(a) Poor Teaching Methods

According to Akinlaye (2003), the objective of teaching is to bring about effective learning. The way and manner in which Social Studies is taught determines the realization of its objectives. Social Studies when well taught produce a balanced person that appreciate the value of good living in the society; the morality that binds the society (Makinde, 1980).

The implication of the above is that teachers were to effectively and efficiently select and use appropriate teaching techniques and resources in their teaching. Most Social Studies teachers still teach the subject as purely intellectual and expository discipline. This according to Iyamu (1999) does not help much in promoting the desired affective learning in the youth.

(b) Numerous Objectives

The objectives the subject tries to attain are too numerous just as the definitions of the subject are numerous. It becomes difficult for all of them to be pursued at the same time. All the objectives are so important that there is lack of priority and this make the curriculum (Social Studies) to look like a subject that falls short of actions.

Consequently, it becomes difficult for the teachers to address the legion of objective at the same time.

(c) **Societal Value System**

The value system in Nigeria is such that it has little or no regard for honesty, hard work, integrity and dedication. This tends to contradict the values and attributes which the subject tries to imbibe in the youth in the classroom.

(d) **Inadequate Professionally Trained Social Studies Teachers**

Another constraint to the realization of the objectives of Social Studies is inadequate trained teachers. A great number of Social Studies teachers in our schools at all levels are not professionally trained to do the job. Mastering of the subject becomes difficult because they are not trained on the appropriate content, skills, or strategies in Social Studies that will enable them to project the importance of the subject to the learners. This trend denied Social Studies its place of relevance and hence a constraint to the realization of its objectives.

(e) **Poor or Lack of Incentives for Citizenry**

In advanced countries such as United States of America and Britain, there are institutionalized means of rewarding or giving incentives to people who demonstrated desirable values and social attributes such as the ones the Nigerian Social Studies objectives are out to attain. In Nigeria this is lacking. Those who demonstrated the desired values and attitudes are not rewarded to continue in it, nor those who have not done so encouraged to change. The lack of adequate reward for good citizens in Nigeria is a factor that hindered the realization of the objectives of Social Studies.

(f) **Corrupt Leaders**

Social Studies is a means of social transformation. The subject is expected to inculcate in the youths the desirable values, behaviours and attitudes that will make them to be responsible, productive and patriotic individuals in the society. Social Studies tend to imbibe in the youth values such as fairness, dedication to duty, hardwork, selflessness, honesty, accountability, tolerance etc. While the Social Studies teachers are busy doing this in the classroom, our youths are confronted with the realities of the socio-economic, political and cultural situations in which those in position of authority and responsibility arrogantly display corruption greed, materialism, injustice and intolerance. These values and actions contradict the ideals, which Social Studies is out to pursue in the classroom.

(g) **Inadequate Basic Needs**

Another constraint to the realization of Social Studies objectives is lack of shortage of necessities of life. Most of our cities today are still characterized by indiscipline; jumping queues, dumping of refuse indiscriminately, struggling, urinating in gutters etc. Most of these behaviours are exhibited not because the people do not like orderliness and decency, but because of pressure and inadequacy of the environment. For example, people jump queues in filling stations because they know that the fuel may finished before it got to their turn because of the irregular supply of fuel to the station.

(h) **Home/Parental Lapses**

Social Studies in Nigerian schools do not have all the potency needed to address the societal problems alone. For Social Studies to attain its set goals, the home must play its basic role of socializing the child. In this regard, what is needed is complete maturity. The school cannot take responsibility for making up for the lapses of the home, as a primary agent of socialization. The effectiveness of the home in

the socialization process tends to have weakened the foundation of Social Studies and stand as a constraint to the realization of its objectives.

(i) **Dearth of Resource Sites/Places**

Students gain a lot from first hand information, when they embark on field trips to resource sites/places. They acquire knowledge and experience when they visit resource sites/places where they can touch, feel, smell manipulate and see things taught to them in the classroom with their naked eyes. Such resource sites/places are inadequate for the effective teaching and learning of Social Studies. This situation is a major constraint to the realization of Social Studies objectives in Nigeria.

(j) **Inadequate Facilities**

Another constraint to the realization of Social Studies objectives in Nigeria is inadequate facilities such as television, camera, computer, video, tape recorder, etc. used for gathering, storing, disseminating and retrieving of information. Most schools find it difficult to procure these materials. This poses a set back to the realization of Social Studies objectives.

(k) **Poor Funding**

Poor funding is another constraint to the realization of Social Studies objectives in Nigeria. A lot of money is required to buy audio-visual aids, text materials, sponsor teachers to seminars, workshops and to organize and conduct field trip/excursions for students. Most of these materials are lacking in our schools, hence impeding on the realization of the objectives Social Studies is out to pursue.

Despite the above constraints, Social Studies objectives can be realized if all the stakeholders in Social Studies take the suggestions below into consideration.

Overcoming the Constraints to the Realization of Social Studies Teaching Objectives in Nigeria

The constraints to the realization of Social Studies objectives can be overcome with the following suggestions and recommendations:

(1) **Good Methods of Teaching**

Social Studies if well taught will produce a balanced individual that will appreciate the value of good living in the society. Good methods of teaching imply the effective and efficient selection and use of appropriate teaching and resources that will make the subject to be value-oriented and problem solving discipline, so that the students will be able to apply the knowledge to actual life situation.

(2) **Need for Priority of the Objective**

The unwieldy nature of the objectives of Social Studies should be addressed. Priority should be given to some of the objectives in order to make it practically realistic for the teachers of Social Studies to address them, since it is difficult to address all the objectives at the same time.

(3) **Need for a Change in the Societal Value**

The present value-system in Nigeria needs to be changed. The emphasis on wealth acquisition should be de-emphasized and more regard should be given to people who are honest and hardworking.

(4) **Need for Professionally Trained Teachers**

Professionally trained Social Studies teacher should be engage in the teaching of the subject. A situation where specialists in allied or sister subjects like History, Sociology, Political Science, Geography etc. are used instead should be stopped.

(5) Provision of Incentive for Citizenry

Just as it is obtainable in the United States and Britain, institutionalized means of rewarding or giving incentives to people who demonstrated desirable values and social attributes such as the ones the Nigerian Social Studies objectives are out to attain should be established. This will motivate the learners to pursue desirable attributes, values and behaviours.

(6) Anti-Corruption Campaign

Anti-corruption campaign should be taken seriously. Leaders in position of authority and responsibilities that are found to be involved in corrupt practices such as greed, injustice, materialism, diversion of public fund etc. should be brought to book. This will serve as deterrence to others and the youth in the society. This will help in the classroom situation.

(7) Provision of Basic Needs

The government should provide the basic needs of life (such as tap water, public toilet etc.) to reduce the pressures and inadequacies of the environment, because most of the indiscipline behaviours are exhibited due to lack of basic needs of life and not because the people do not like orderliness and decency. This will help in the realization of the teaching objectives.

(8) The Home Playing its Role of Socialization

For Social Studies to achieve its set goals, the home/parents (family) must play its basic role of socialization. The training of the child in moral behaviour should not be left for the teachers in the school alone.

(9) Need to Improve Resource Sites/Places

Resource sites/places across the country should be improved so that students can visit

them during field trips. Students gain a lot from first hand information when they embark on field trips to resource sites/places.

(10) Need for the Provision of Facilities

Facilities are also very important in realizing the objectives of Social Studies. Facilities for teaching Social Studies can be procured by the government or improvised by the teachers and the students.

(11) Provision of Adequate Fund

Adequate fund should be made available for Social Studies education programmes. This will help in the procurement of instructional materials and sponsorship of Social Studies teachers to workshops, seminars etc.

Recommendations

This paper examined the numerous objectives of Social Studies in the Nigerian context, the constraints to the realization of the objectives and how to overcome them. As said earlier, considering the role of Social Studies education to the nation, something must be done to overcome these constraints. Therefore, I recommended among others, good methods of teaching, need for priority in the objectives, need for change in the societal values, need for professionally trained Social Studies teachers, provision of incentive for citizenry, provision of basic needs, anti-corruption campaign, the home/parents playing its role of socialization, need to improve resource sites/places, need for provision of facilities and provision of adequate fund.

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