

TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE TEACHING OF SOCIAL STUDIES

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Abstract

Education is an important asset to any nation and has been defined by different communities. For any community or country to develop, there must be good and sound education. As a problem-solving subject, Social Studies education plays an important role in the development of the nation. The successful teaching of Social Studies depends on the attitudes of the teachers towards teaching the subject. It is on this background that this paper focused attention on the attitude of Social Studies teachers toward the teaching of Social Studies. Discussions are also made on the problems facing the subject and the teachers and how to find solution to those problems. Finally conclusions and recommendations are made.

Ololobou (2004) conceptualized Social Studies as “an organized integrated study of man and his environment, both physical and social emphasizing on cognition functions, skills and desirable attitude and actions for the purpose of producing an effective citizenry”. Moreover, it is not only a study, but also a way of life geared towards the problems of society so that adequate action could be taken to create a better society. The subject of Social Studies should be well taught and the place to begin with is the teachers. It is therefore necessary to examine the attitude of Social Studies teachers towards the teaching of subject in order to enhance the effectiveness of teaching the subject. Attitude of teachers towards the teaching of Social Studies is one of the problems militating against the fulfillment of its objectives. The other problems include: the problems of reconciling different methods, lack of appropriate textbooks and relevant teaching aids, lack of enthusiasm, and lack of trained teachers.

Problems of Social Studies Teachers and their Attitudes Towards Social Studies

In Nigeria as well as in many other parts of the world, Social Studies teachers are faced with many problems. “Teaching of Social Studies in Nigeria schools faces certain constraints “as reported by Dubey and Barth (1980) and Adewoye (1991). They reported that Social Studies instruction is incapacitated because many teachers are not professionally trained. They have inadequate training in the philosophy, goals and methodology of Social Studies. They therefore emphasize those content areas in which they specialized.

Some teachers in the United Kingdom perceived Social Studies as a subject without core knowledge to be acquired. These types of teacher feel that Social Studies cannot provide children with facts and concepts of its own. For example, in Geography, some facts such as the movement of heavenly bodies like the sun and other stars, movement of ocean currents and the wind are considered natural phenomenon belonging to Geography. History the concepts of revolution, facism, kingdom, selfdom, dictatorship to mention but a few can be taught by the History teachers. In consideration of the above, one wonders that what then will the Social Studies teacher be teaching? This question and perhaps many others like this tend to disturb the minds of Social Studies teachers.

It should be pointed out however, that the success of Social Studies programme depends largely on the attitudes and efficiency of the teachers. Butter and Wren (1960) wrote “a poorly prepared teacher can destroy the effectiveness of any carefully selected or well organized curriculum with inadequate and unenthusiastic instruction and indifferent and negative attitude”. To this end teachers in general and Social Studies teachers in particular as suggested by Kadiri (2004) ... “must be knowledgeable in the subject matter, dynamic, understand the principles of individual differences, possess adequate knowledge of the child development and be knowledgeable in the principles of learning. They must in addition “be committed” and keen for them to function well as Social Studies educators for the 21st century and beyond”.

It is a professionally trained teacher that can use even inadequately structured curriculum to build an instructional programme of significant merit.

Onyabe (1980) observed that the graduate teachers or NCE holders who major in specific subjects in their training prefer to be identified with their field of specialization.

However, with the persistent effort of the Nigerian universities, federal and state colleges of education, large number of professionally trained Social Studies teachers are becoming available in the classrooms. Social Studies is now being offered in most Nigerian universities at undergraduate and post graduate levels and as a single and or double major in most colleges of education in Nigeria.

It may be necessary to mention here that Social Studies need more government attention. The Federal Ministry of Education should endeavour to implement effectively the National Policy on education and give Social Studies appropriate backing morally and financially perhaps we may say that the general qualities and qualification expected of a Social Studies teacher is not yet fully generated in those teachers assigned to teach the subject.

The Problem of Social Studies in Nigeria

Just like any other subjects taught in schools, Social Studies have problems. These problems are many and interdependent. Some of them are as a result of the newness of the subject in this part of the world. The subject is new in the sense that it was introduced into the country in 1958, and many subject specialists believe that it has come to replace the subject of the social sciences. But is not like that because it is a problem solving subject.

Some of the Problems of Social Studies Include the Following:

Obemeata, (1981) observed that Social Studies has not been well defined. That at the moment Social Studies is a conglomeration of the different social sciences subject. The social science subject specialists argue that how much of History, Geography, Economics, Political Science, and Civics e.t.c to include pose a problem. Some people see Social Studies as History and Geography; some see it as civics, others see it as current affairs, while many others yet see it as a collection of many subjects. The specialists conclude that the content of Social Studies is still faced with multiple interpretation of terms. The curriculum of Social Studies touches many areas. Therefore, teachers and students are engaged in teaching and learning multiple terms during Social Studies classes.

There is the problem of materials, and where available, the teachers are mostly reluctant in using them in Nigeria. Because of the newness of Social Studies (introduced in 1958) the materials for the subject with Nigeria background are very few. NTI(1990) observed that in some schools, especially those in the rural areas, there is non-existence of Social Studies teaching materials of any type. Obiadi (1980) commented that it requires a lot of teacher’s time and resources to make materials suitable for the teaching and learning of Social Studies. Inadequate teachers is another problem facing

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Social Studies. There is noticeable shortage of Social Studies teachers in Nigeria. According to Obemeata (1981) "the subject Social Studies was introduced without teachers and teacher trainers. For this reasons teachers were borrowed from different subject areas to teach Social Studies. Even some of these teachers cannot differentiate between Social Studies and the traditional disciplines of History and Geography.

The Evaluation Problem

The amount of knowledge gained in Social Studies cannot be easily evaluated by the "paper pencil" method. Social Studies is expected among other things, to have positive effects on human behaviour and human relations. NTI (1990) stated that this affective domain aspect of Social Studies is difficult to evaluate through our system of evaluation which concentrates on the cognitive domain Obiach (1980) contended that it will be difficult to know from the present system whether a student has developed an autonomous personality, good citizenship leadership qualities, a critical and analytical mind, selflessness, justice, fair play and other humanistic qualities which promote harmonious co-existence among mankind.

Another factor is the problem of text books and reading materials, there are only very few textbooks of social studies which can satisfy the needs of student and teachers.

Adeyoyin quoted in NTI(1990) stated that lack of textbooks is a major problem facing the teaching of Social Studies in Nigeria.

Obiadi (1980) observed that "some specialists from other disciplines have suddenly dabbled into Social Studies to write text books in a field in which they know little or nothing about". He alerted that their main motive is to exploits the situation and make money before the dust settle.

Another problem is resistance. The introduction of Social Studies in Nigeria has been and is being resisted in some parts of the country. Most noticeable resistance came especially from teachers of the traditional subject of Geography, History, Civic and Economics etc. For instance, the principle of teacher training colleges in Imo State once led a delegation to the Imo State ministry of education and demanded the abolition of Social Studies (Obiadi 1980).

Solution to the Problem of Social Studies

It is a clear fact that Social Studies has many problems, but it is good at this point to address these problem. Social Studies should be considered from the point of view that it is an integrated approach to the study of people in all its ramifications, historical, social, economical political and scientific. There should be clear and acceptable definition of Social Studies which will help teachers to disseminate accurate information on the nature of Social Studies at the grass root. NTI (1990), observed that though many people have defined Social Studies differently, many of these definitions do not make the subject relevant to the Nigeria need.

The problems of materials can be over come by providing adequate funds for the provision of materials for effective teaching and leaning of Social Studies. NTI (1990), advised that material like newspapers, pictures, Radio, Video tape film and films strips and other audio visual instruments should be provided by education authorities. The teachers and students on their parts should always be resourceful in order to improvise materials, aids for teaching the subject. Also, teachers of Social Studies should go on intensive workshops and seminars to solve the problem of shortage of trained man power.

On the problems of evaluation, Ololobou, (2004) suggested that "the problems of evaluation can be over come by cautious and continues evaluation which will include assessment by observation

among other things. By this system, the teacher should create a short chart where by he will be entering changes in the student's behaviors. The students should be given specific assignments in rotation to test particular qualities. Obiadi (1981) is of the opinion that written test should, in addition to others find its proper position to test certain aspect of leaning.

Conclusions

Despite these problem, Social Studies is fast growing with the persistent efforts of Nigeria Universities, Federal and State Colleges of Education, Large number of professionally trained Social Studies teachers are becoming available in the classrooms more relevant text books are being produced and more people are becoming aware of the nature and philosophy of Social Studies.

Social Studies is comparatively a new discipline in the country. However, Social Studies is now being offered in all primary, junior secondary schools, colleges of education and most Nigerian Universities up to Phd. level.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion in this paper, the following recommendations are made:

Lack of textbooks is a challenging situation to Social Studies. The qualified Social Studies teachers should produce suitable textbooks and reference material for students and teachers. However, the books should be written according to the content of the approved syllabus and according to the level of the people for which the books are intended. Also, workshops and seminars should be organized from time to time on the nature and philosophy of Social Studies.

1. Adequate funds should be provided for the provision of teaching and learning.
2. There should be workshop and seminars for Social Studies teachers.
3. There should be qualified Social Studies teachers and relevant textbooks of Social Studies according to the content of approved syllabus and according to the level of the learner.
4. Teachers should create a chart by entering changes in the student's behaviour as evaluation process.

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