

FOCUSING SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION TO ADDRESS INNOVATIVE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ISSUES FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

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Abstract

High quality education implementation through Social Studies instruction at the tertiary level in Nigeria is a primary necessity to equip the learner to survive in a competitive world. The possession of global education equips the learners in the new world order that is knowledge driven, highly technologic and emphatic on world interconnection, with requisite knowledge, ideas, values and skills to make innovative contributions to the advancement of nations and the international society at large. For Social Studies to achieve these novel and lofty objectives, it requires articulate professionally trained teachers, use of best pedagogic practices and innovative materials to facilitate learning, funding of researches to enlarge scope of teaching and learning amongst others. The integration of global education into Social Studies curricular of tertiary institutions in Nigeria will not entail dwarfing the local context extraordinarily. This is because one of the critical avowed objectives of Social Studies is to produce functional national citizens. This exposition for clearer insight will be focused on the need for improving the quality of Social Studies instruction; the quality of teachers needed to make Social Studies competitive and the associated constraints.

Any worthwhile school instruction ought to accommodate innovative learning experiences and inculcation of entrepreneurial skills in order to be needful in contemporary global society. It is therefore imperative to reposition the teaching of Social Studies at all levels of education in Nigeria specifically at the tertiary institutions of Colleges of Education and Universities in line with contemporary societal needs and to make the learner fit into the world of work. Globalization of education emanates from world mindedness. The impact of globalization has some curriculum concerns or implications (Ikwumelu, 2009).

The implications are adjusting contents, teachers' constant professional development, equipping the learner with contemporary knowledge, values and thinking patterns to create potential ideas and knowledge, to acquire skills to fit into different work organizations. This also requires extensive use of information and communication technologies and the application of E-learning in the teaching of Social Studies. This is to enlarge the practical scope of instruction and give ample room for teachers and learning involvement in Social Studies curriculum building. Social Studies equips the learners with the social skills of problem identification, interpretation, analysis and evaluation including social interaction, human relations education, cooperation, cooperative learning, team work which are germane (for enhancing job creativity) in Nigeria (Mezieobi, 2011). The afore-mentioned ideas are needed in industrial and various work organizations to enhance target productive output.

Conceptual Framework

The study of Social Studies affects all man's interactive relationship on earth. Social Studies is tailored to satisfy individual, national and international aspirations for nation building. In line with this focus, Ezegebe (2012:118) noted "Social Studies objectives (at Nigeria's all levels of education enterprise) are derived or drawn from the National Educational objectives and are aimed towards realization of the aspirations of the National Educational objectives." The scope of Social Studies ought to be progressively and dynamically redirected at emerging innovative frontiers of knowledge and information dispensation in order to produce versatile graduates with skills to fit into the contemporary international society. Remarkably, to continue to focus Social Studies at the Nigerian society persistently is a major limitation to global knowledge interconnectedness. This may stand to reduce learners' capability to compete internationally, create and tender innovative ideas to societal problem situations. In clear terms, extreme local Social Studies' contents may vitiate learners' innovativeness because of limited global international understanding of cultures, science and technology.

Ideally, the new phase of Social Studies instruction has gone beyond the study of immediate local environment, individual life patterns as upheld by Kissock (1981) and Okam (1992). The new dispensation calls for the extension of Social Studies to the study of international communities, interconnectedness of nations, international relations, international politics, explosive discoveries in science and technology including how to make the international environment safe from health hazard pandemic as COVID-19 and others.

Societies accept functional curriculum in reaction to social change which imbues the learners with entrepreneurial skills to live, survive and compete internationally and productively in the global work space. Against this background, Cornelius-Ukpabi and Obara (2009:221) pinpointed that innovativeness and globalization education are not only "...about delivery of (Social Studies) subject matter (content) but about (entrepreneurial) skills of learning that can be applied after leaving school." The gain of the integration of global education, innovativeness and entrepreneurial education into Social Studies curriculum at tertiary level is to make the graduates viable, creative and personalities who can carve out means of livelihood.

The Need for improving the Quality of Social Studies Instruction

The quality of Social Studies Education improvement and updating in contents is expected to yield the following benefits:

1. **World mindedness:** Harvey (1975) advanced that global education exposes young learners to the interconnectedness of the global system including sensitization of unfolding dynamic events in the world. Anwuka (2005) submitted that a responsive (Social Studies) curriculum is structured and can be restructured to rebuild the society. Based on the fore-going discourse, Social Studies curriculum is not expected to be moribund, stagnant, static and docile to innovations in information and unfolding social events in the global society.

2. **Accommodation of dynamic emergent issues:** The scope of Social Studies has been adjudged to be inelastic or limitless (Ololobou 1992, Adedoyin 1993 & Mezieobi, 2011). Social Studies curriculum ought to be flexible, fluid and open to constant revision, improvement and updating in order to be functional in a new world order that cherishes qualitative universal education. It is

interesting to note that “one of the greatest weapons one must possess to survive and compete favourably (in Nigeria and the globe) is education (Akpochafo, 2014)” transmitted through Social Studies instruction.

3. Understanding the world as a global village: The world is a global village of information, knowledge and values sharing. The learner should acquire international knowledge and cultural understanding in order to improve their innovativeness on social problems that need practical solutions. Furthermore, Cornelius-Ukpebi and Obara (2009:221) posited “...(Social Studies) curriculum should be flexible to accumulate evolving new knowledge and (entrepreneurial) skills which learners will acquire to become functional in a changing society.” Obioma (2006) recognized that quality education will help in attaining NEEDS targets. Functional Social Studies curriculum change in line with global changes prepares the learners to fit into the local, national and international society.

4. Equipping the learner with functional intellectual and entrepreneurial skills: Woodhall (1970) foresaw (Social Studies) education as investment in human capital which consequently yields economic benefits and adds to a country’s future wealth while Igbokwe (2010) described Social Studies education as an approved channel to social, economic, industrial and technological emancipation. The contents of Social Studies curriculum should induce creative thinking and incorporate entrepreneurial education.

It is what (Social Studies) students actually learn that determines their employability or otherwise. It is what makes highly sought workers or rejectees (Akpochafo, 2014). The quality of Social Studies teachers and the actual classroom input determine the effectiveness and the realization of Social Studies curriculum objectives. Furthermore, effective and efficient teacher builds the intellectual, the innovative stature and the entrepreneurial potentials of the students through well researched contents, information clarifying materials and evaluation strategies that evoke solutions to societal problems.

5. Diversification of knowledge and information: Global education provides multiple and varied learning experiences to learners’ cognition. National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) (1982) commented that international education exposes children to the interconnectedness of world cultures, species and activities in the planet. It teaches cultural similarities, diversities, environmental influences on occupation, education, cultural behaviour, health care and science and technology.

6. To remain globally competitive: Today’s education that makes one to become internationally visible is acceptable by advanced and developing nations. To buttress the afore-stated, Asiyai (2013) cautioned that the contemporary knowledge based economy stresses and calls for citizens of countries to embrace qualitative right type of education and training for functional existence in their society and to compete globally.

Quality of Social Studies Teachers Needed to make Social Studies competitive

Sound professionally trained Social Studies teachers remain strategic in the implementation of Social Studies curriculum. The following identified factors are notable:

1. Social Studies teachers ought to be knowledgeable about the contents (subject matters), ideas, concepts, skills, values, methods and generalizations associated with the instructional process (Mezieobi, Tamunosa & Essien, 2017). This is to ensure appropriate teaching to realize the transformative goal objects of Social Studies.

2. Effective professionally equipped Social Studies teachers are prepared through high quality training and continuous development on the job. This is to ensure teaching effectiveness. A sound groomed Social Studies teacher as reported by Offorma (2014:10) ought to be “well trained, competent, effective and efficient.” In addition, Ololobou (1992:2) stated that professionally trained Social Studies teacher should be “a repository of Social Studies’ philosophy, content and methodology and (ought to be) prepared to reflect these in performing his role as a Social Studies (crusader).”
3. Akpochafo (2014) asserted that there is no best method of teaching Social Studies but recommended combination of best instructional practices or eclectic methods. This approach enhances effective learning because exposure to divergent learning experiences and practices stimulate learners to react and respond intellectually and practically to societal challenges or problem-solving situations.
4. It has become imperative to train and retrain teachers on the use of innovative instructional practices. Mezieobi (2014) identified the most appropriate method of teaching Social Studies as follows: inquiry method, problem-solving method, simulation method, discussion method, dramatization method, questioning method including individualized instruction, programmed instruction, computer-assisted (guided) instruction, mastery learning instructional method, advanced organizer model of instruction, flexible scheduling. Others are team (cooperative or collaborative) teaching, concept mapping, future wheel instructional model, values clarification method and ICT in Social Studies. These innovative methods are ideal in transmitting content to achieve results but to what extent are teachers trained for utilization of these methods in reality? It behooves on teacher training institutions of colleges of education and universities to train Social Studies graduates towards the use of different pedagogic practices in vogue.
5. Teachers ought to be resourceful to generate innovative ideas, contents and information as the ability to stimulate critical thinking in learners are paramount.
6. Social Studies teachers ought to be conversant with the teaching and the employing evaluation strategies to cover the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. This is the realistic process of implementing articulate Social Studies curriculum for balanced personality development.

Constraints

The following identified constraints are envisaged:

1. **Poor funding of research in Social Studies:** Funding of education aid Social Studies education research. Specifically, Akpochafo (2014: 1) noted “...many nations appreciate the edifying effect of education and therefore strive to invest heavily on it. Though Nigeria appreciates the effect of education (in national transformation and global interconnection), effort to make it edifying is not commendable.” Funding of research in Social Studies will improve the quality of instruction and learning outcome.
2. **Ineffective professional training of teachers:** Repositioning of the teaching of Social Studies for global competitiveness, inculcation of innovative ideas and survival skills requires adequate training and exposure of teachers to the use of information communication technologies. Many Social Studies teachers are not professionally trained to acquire these skills and also be computer competent for quality Social Studies instruction in schools.
3. **Influx of non-professionally trained Social Studies teachers:** There are many non-professionally trained Social Studies teachers in tertiary institutions in Nigeria (Ololobou, 1992 & Mezieobi, 2011).

They lack the knowledge of the goal objects of Social Studies and the application of the best pedagogic practices in the classroom (Akpochofo, 2014 & Mezieobi, 2014). The result is ineffective implementation of Social Studies curricular in tertiary institutions of Nigeria.

4. **Stagnant curriculum:** Social Studies curricular are not constantly revised to accommodate contemporary changes. This results in inability to equip the learners with diversified learning experiences including exposure to field research, inquiry and E-learning amongst others.

5. **Nature of curriculum acceptable for globalization:** Stromquist and Monkman (2001) were worried if local school curriculum (Social Studies) should be abandoned for the international alternative. Ikwumelu (2009:11) contributed “National curriculum should not be abandoned; the cross-cultural understanding, global issues and problems as well as global dynamics should not be neglected in the development of such curriculum.” The abandonment of Social Studies’ local curriculum substantially will mean inventing educational goals that negates national needs and aspirations as well as utilizing practical environment learning experiences that facilitate teaching and learning of Social Studies. In addition, Social Studies integrates learners with the immediate society’s culture, national cultures and civic competences to become functional Nigerian citizens.

Globalization may not entail dwarfing local content but enriching it with external dynamic issues in politics, economy, science, technology, health issues, agriculture, conflict generation issues, youth restiveness, increasing poverty and youth unemployment. Others are leadership abuse of democratic principles, contamination and abuse of human rights, emerging social problems as racism, ethnicity, religious fundamentalism, banditry, kidnapping or hostage taking, terrorism, violence against women, raping, trafficking in human person amongst others. For an escape on acceptable Social Studies curriculum for globalization, Parker, Ninomiya and Cogan (1999) advanced for “multi-national curriculum development” which will blend national issues of different nations. We in this discourse, adopt substantial mixture of local and foreign curriculum that is learner-centered.

Conclusion

Social Studies curricular in tertiary institutions in Nigeria can be used to project global education when the scope is constantly revised and enlarged with contemporary issues. In addition, lecturers ought to be professionally groomed in order to apply the best pedagogic practices that are refined to initiate creativity, entrepreneurial skills and innovativeness in the learner. The goal-objects of Social Studies stand to be achieved through effective teaching, sourcing and integration of contents from local and foreign backgrounds.

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