

TOWARDS REFORMS AND INNOVATION IN SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD

Palmer Isite Odogbor

*Department of Primary Education Studies,
Delta State College of Sports and Science Education,
Mosogar, Delta State*

Godspower Ogaga Oyibo

*Department of Primary Education Studies,
Delta State College of Sports and Science Education,
Mosogar, Delta State*

Abstract

The introduction of social studies education into the Nigeria educational scene is part of the all-important efforts geared toward making education relevant to the needs and aspirations of the Nigeria society. This paper examines the reforms and innovation of social studies Education in Nigeria. The objectives of social studies education, the state of social studies education in Nigeria, reforms and innovation of social studies education in Nigeria, as well as workable recommendations have been put forward in order for social studies education to achieve the earmarked goals for which it was introduced in the 1950s.

Introduction

The prevailing situation in the Nigerian society portrays a gloomy picture that the educational system is ill and calls for attention of every well meaning patriotic Nigerian and all stakeholders in education (Odogbor and Oyibo, 2007). As the Nigeria nation needs rebirth, the education system equally needs reforms and innovation in order, to achieve the goal-object of the national policy on Education (NPE). To lend credence to this, Kingibe (2008), posits that:

We need to undertake a critical review of our educational system in terms of its fundamental philosophy and goal;

We must emphasize its capacity to create an educated citizenry, which can support and anchor a civilized, democratic policy; it must work to create opportunities across the entire social spectrum, and produce a nation of skilled citizens who are directly linked to the Nigerian economy, it must reflect and champion our highest cultural values, and provide our citizens with a sense of national pride and mission (p.47).

This reforms and innovation in education however, is expected to take diverse dimensions. This paper shall be putting forward the social studies perspective, and it is believed that if its ideals are cross – fertilized with that from other disciplines or positions will help tremendously in refining the educational system in Nigeria, for the next level of development, especially in this area of globalization.

Reforms and Innovation: Towards a Definition

Reform is the process of improving on a system in order to make it more effective, efficient, relevant and usable. To Edukugh (2007), it involves among other things the development of policy alternatives, experimentation, implementation and feedback.

Innovation on the other hand is the process of introducing novel ideas into a system that is already in existence with the intention of making it more refined, comprehensive, effective and productive, in order to ensure effectiveness. Innovations are experimented in a small-scale, adjustments made, retried and if results are positive, they can be applied in a large-scale (Ben-Yunusa, 2000).

Reforms and innovation therefore indicates official changes geared towards maximum benefits, efficiency and productivity of a system.

Objectives of Social Education

Michealis (1965) cited by Odogbor and Oyibo (2007), states that, objectives are indicative of general directions and

desired outcomes of programmes, serving as bread guides to planning, development and education for curriculum and instruction.”

The National Educational Aims and Objectives from which Social Studies Education Objectives were tailored are stated in the Revised National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004:8).

1. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
2. The inculcation of right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian Society;
3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the World around; and
4. The acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipments, for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society.

Drawing from the aforesaid national objectives of education in Nigeria, the objectives of Social Studies Education in Nigeria are as follows:

1. To train the learners to become good, productive, efficient citizens and nation builders by helping them to develop positive skill, competences, habits and attitudes of togetherness to one another towards the nation as a whole.

2. To acquaint learners with a broad knowledge of the abundant natural resources in the physical environment, as well as their conservation and utilization for the attainment of national growth and development.
3. To equip learner with socio economic, culture and political issues as equipment to contribute one's quota to the welfare and general good of the masses.
4. To make learner's to appreciate their rich culture heritage and those of other ethnic nationalities.
5. To train learners to imbibe the virtue of independence, tolerance self -discipline, social effectiveness, obedience, honesty, humility and good conduct.
6. To build learners the team spirit of togetherness, comradeship and cooperation towards peace, unity and progress of the nation.

From the lead of Okobiah (1984), social studies education is aimed at producing citizens with skills, competence, moral values and reasoned judgment to effectively live, interact, inter-related and contribute positively to the economic, social, political and cultural development of the Nigerian society.

Okam (1998), stated that, "the ultimate objectives of a social studies programme is the development and

improvement of living generally, not merely in the classroom, but in the community, country, and in the world as a whole.

Unfortunately, as laudable and lofty as the aforestated objectives, they are hardly attained, since moral decadence and social problems have continued unabated. The Nigerian nation is problem glut. The issue of growing child abuse, drugs addiction, disease of HIV/AIDS, cultism; bribery and corruption, robbery, examination malpractice, religious and ethnic conflicts, etc. in the society can be addressed by Social Studies Education (Okojie 2006). But this has not been made possible because of the state of Social Studies Education at all levels of Education in Nigeria. Today, may are beginning to doubt the justification for the emphasis on Social Studies in Nigerian Schools especially in the face of increasing wave of delinquency, conduct and personality disorders, crime, public indiscipline and so on (Iyamu 1999).

The State of Social Studies Education in Nigeria

In spite of the efforts made by educationists and government agencies in establishing the teaching of Social Studies in School and Colleges since the 1950s, Social Studies education in Nigeria has been bogged by the problem of traditionalism – a future that makes the enterprise very unsalutary (Okojie, 2006).

This condition emanates from the following problems: faulty notion of the nature of Social Studies by educators, unwieldy objectives, non-teaching of

Social Studies in Senior Secondary School, inadequate professional teachers, inadequate methods of instruction, paucity of instructional resourced, non-utilization of resources persons and faulty instructional evaluation procedures.

1. Faulty Notion of the Nature of Social Studies by Educators

The instructional Practices exhibited in many schools and colleges in this country depicted a confused notion of the main difference between what Social Studies stand for and the Social Studies enterprise (Okam 1988). This situation does not stimulate a healthy condition for the actualization of Social Studies curriculum agenda, since it creates some kind of discrepancies and distortions among learners.

2. Unwieldy Objectives

As there are legions of authorities in Social Studies, so also there are compendiums of objectives, to the extent that it is a curriculum that falls short of focus. Consequently, it becomes practically unrealistic for the teacher to address the legions of objectives at the same time (Iyamu 1999).

3. Non-Teaching of Social Studies in Senior Secondary Schools

In Nigeria, there is a missing link in the teaching of Social Studies from primary to tertiary levels (Odogbor and Oyibo 2007). This missing link came about as a result of the non-teaching of

Social Studies at the Senior Secondary School Level, where as its components are taught in the forms of History, Government, Geography, Religion and Economics. This situation is a disservice to the attainment of the lofty goals of Social Studies Education in Nigeria.

4. Inadequate Professional Teachers

A great percentage of Social Studies Teachers in our schools today at all levels are ill equipped in terms of mastery of the subject matter because they are not Social Studies Professionals (Odogbor and Oyibo 2007). They dabble into the teaching of Social Studies by virtue of being a specialist in the sister disciplines such as Geography, Economics, Political Science, History, Psychology, Sociology etc. Social Studies cannot be effectively taught by these crops of Educators because they are not properly grounded in the content of pedagogy of Social Studies that will project the relevance of the subject to the learners. Therefore, if we allow this situation to continue, the effective implementation of the Social Studies innovation in the country would continue to be a mirage (Iyela 2005).

5. Inadequate Methods of Instruction

The way Social Studies is taught goes a long way in determining the attainment of the set objectives. This must have prompted Awe (1976); 1 and 2 cited by Fadeiye (2005:v6) to posit that;

“Social Studies as a discipline if properly programmed and effectively taught should help to solve Social problems that are facing developing countries like ours (Nigeria) where the old norms are fast losing their grips and no effective substitute to replace them.”

Many Social Studies teachers today still teach Social Studies as purely intellectual and expository discipline, using mainly antiquated and traditional methods to teach the students. The situation will not promote any meaningful learning in this era of globalization.

6. **Paucity of Instructional Resources**

A leading constraint to the attainment of the earmarked goals of Social Studies Education in Nigeria is in paucity of instructional resources. It is a well-known fact that most of the resources are either not available or when available, are not adequate due to the paucity of funds (Iyela 2005).

This has crippled the full attainment of the laudable objectives of Social Studies in the Country.

7. **Non-Utilization of Resource Person in the Teaching of Social Studies.**

A resource person is any authority other than the regular subject teacher, whose wealth of experience, talent, skills, knowledge, ideas etc. are of immense value in motivating students in their search for facts in a particular Social Studies lesson. Students hear

and get facts from the horses mouth since such person is simply an authority in the field of his discussion (Orakwe 2000). Yet, resource Person's are hardly utilized in our schools and colleges, this is a bane to the attainment of Social Studies set objectives.

8. **Faulty Instructional Procedure**

Instructional evaluation of learning outcomes of Social Studies in Nigeria is centered majorly on traditional methods where greater emphasis is paid to the attainment of Objectives that are related only to the cognitive domain. Okojie (2006), alleges that, the basis of Social Studies Education is faulty because it generally lacks the correct use of evaluation procedures for ascertaining and collecting evidence of pupils growth particularly in the affective and psychomotor areas of the subject. This failure in employing the requisite evaluation procedures in Social Studies Education stems from inexperience on part of the teachers, and the situation is a big set back to the attainment of positive values by the students.

Reforms and Innovation in Social Studies Education in Nigeria

The state of Social Studies Education in Nigeria can be reformed and innovated to serve the all important – purpose for which it was introduced in the Nigerian Educational System in the 1950s. The followings are some of the needed reforms and innovations:

1. The instructional practices among Social Studies educators will be improved upon by making it more stimulating and devoid of discrepancies/distortions.
2. An approved unified objectives of Social Studies Education will be put in place in order to avoid the present catalogues of objectives.
3. Social Studies will be mounted in Senior Secondary Schools in Nigeria like other sister disciplines Geography, economics, Government etc.
4. Only professionally trained Social Studies teachers with proven integrity will hence forth be allowed to teach Social Studies courses, topics or lessons at all levels of education in Nigeria.
5. Current methods of teaching Social Studies will be made known to Social Studies teachers at all levels through regular seminars and workshops.
6. Greater emphasis will be paid to the availability of instructional resources for the effective teaching of Social Studies through procurement and improvisation.
7. Resource persons will be invited from time to time to complement the professional efforts of the class teacher.
8. Evaluation procedures in Social Studies will be centred more on the affective domain, rather than on the cognitive domain.

Conclusion

If Nigeria expects to employ Social Studies Education in achieving a healthy and effective educational system, there has to be reforms and innovation, which implies serious official change involving a total overhauling of the pedagogy associated with the subject area. This paper discussed the objectives of Social Studies, the state of Social Studies Education in Nigeria, reforms and innovation in Social Studies Education in Nigeria as well as some useful recommendation. These recommendations from the Social Studies perspective, if well adopted with those from other disciplines, the educational system in Nigeria will be comparable positively with that of developed nations of the world. This is against the background that:

“We in Social Studies-----
Must take the best from the past,
eliminating the worst and we must in a
similar spirit be willing to try a variety
of new ideas which will bring about a
better life for those yet to be born”
(Anwukah, 1985.

Thus, any nation’s educational system without reforms and innovation is a disaster for that country’s tomorrow, and such a nation will be heading for retrogression.

Recommendations

In order for Social Studies Education to contribute its quota to the reforms and innovation agenda of the

Nigerian educational system, the following recommendations are made:

1. Social Studies educators should select and apply appropriate instructional resources that will assist in inculcating the spirit of tolerance, togetherness, patriotism and nation building in the learners.
2. Social Studies educators should possess good character, or positive values, habits and should be able to impart same in the learners.
3. Social Studies educators should build in the learners the tenet of co-operation among themselves, so that peace, unity and progress can be sustained in the country, irrespective of tribe, religion and party affiliation.
4. Learners should be made to respect their ethos and that of other people.

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