

RELEVANCE OF CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ‘SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

MEZIEOBI S. A & TAMUNOSA BROWN

Research Scholar, Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology,
Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Social studies education curriculum at all levels of education enterprise in Nigeria is potentially effective in projecting contemporary issues. The relevance of projecting contemporary issues through social studies instruction are: information for social living, education for peace building, dynamism, environmental education, including political, social, technological and scientific knowledge. Strategies of integrating contemporary issues in social studies curriculum are highlighted as follows: constant review of social studies curriculum to incorporate contemporary issues, application of ICT in teaching and learning of social studies, use of resource persons, and periodic review of textbooks amongst others. Constraints envisaged are: periodic non review of social studies curriculum, a good number of teachers are not ICT compliant, social studies textbooks are not periodically reviewed, and teachers are not exposed to workshops, conferences and seminars to enhance their quality, including other reasons identified. Conclusion was drawn based on the foregoing discourse; some of the recommendations are as follows: constant review of social studies curriculum at all levels of education in Nigeria, exposure of teachers to ICT, books are to be updated amongst others.

KEYWORDS: Dynamism, Environmental Education, Scientific Knowledge

INTRODUCTION

Social studies education is meant to be dynamic with contemporary events in the society. These contemporary events may be knowledge and information explosion, social problems, crimes, value education, issues in technology, political violence amongst others. Nigeria as a developing country is enveloped in different types of crimes as kidnapping, abductions, robberies, political violence, leadership depletion of national treasury, the incidences of ghost workers, nonpayment of workers, of recent is the Boko Haram, saga which has led to increase in the upsurge of internally displaced persons, which makes the study of contemporary issues potent in social studies at all levels of education in Nigeria, spanning from Nursery, primary, upper basic level, senior secondary schools, colleges of education and the university. According to Mezieobi (2013) “ as a result of societal dynamism, modern social studies must be attuned to reflect societal ever changing needs and the people’s aspirations”.

To buttress the essence of social studies in environmental related issues of concern to humanity, Uchendu (1997), Ezeudu (2003) and Osakwe (2009) have pointed out that social studies education should be strategic in projecting contemporary issues as it is focused with issues concerning the interplay of man with emerging activities in his political, social, economic and technological environment.

Echefu and Onoh (2016) in a study in Ebonyi State of Nigeria found that social studies curriculum at the junior secondary school level reflects adequately contemporary issues; the study further maintained that social studies teachers are aware of the need to promote contemporary issues and the goals of social studies curriculum are relevant for the promotion of contemporary issues. Ukadike and Okobia (2006) expressed that the essence of social studies is to equip learners with social skills and values that will be adequate in uplifting the society. The knowledge of contemporary issues will reposition learners to appreciate societal challenges and critically beginning to imagine positive ways of reshaping the society for peaceful social living. Echefu and Onoh (2016) visualize contemporary issues as critical and crucial societal emerging events that deserve deep societal actions for the improvement of the peace and social order in a state.

From the foregoing exposition, it is imperative that contemporary issues requires to be incorporated in social studies curriculum at all levels of our education experience in Nigeria, as it will make the curriculum relevant to national advancement and development. To give the foregoing discourse a manageable scope, the following will be addressed: the relevance of contemporary issues in social studies education, the strategies of integrating contemporary issues in social studies curriculum and the constraints envisaged.

Conceptual Framework

Social studies in the Nigerian concept is the integrated study of man in his physical, social, economic and technological environment (Mezieobi and Mezieobi 2012). Esu and Dania (1999) perceived social studies as a potential school instruction meant to revamp the society enveloped in emerging crises through its integrative power. It is potentially necessary to ensure that the scope of social studies curriculum is constantly incorporated with contemporary issues in order to make social studies contemporarily relevant and sensitive to national needs and aspirations.

Contemporary issues are sensitive emerging issues in the Nigerian society that calls for national attention, such as increasing poverty, prostitution, kidnapping, political violence, cattle rustling, herdsmen violence clashes with farmers across the state of Nigeria amongst others. Positive issues as interest in girl child education, entrepreneurial education, technological advancement through the use of local resource, improvement in security consciousness and national defence are contemporary issues. Contemporary issues in all its entirety are not only negative socio-political or technological development. International Education (2014) assert that (contemporary issues) can be used in “building a culture of peace”, while, Ossai (2016:398) said contemporary issues will “...create in students the attitude of resolving conflicts, ...the good attitude of (maintaining) peace., respect, love, cooperation and togetherness”. It is the focus of nations to install education for democratic stabilization and social order in order to create atmosphere for sustainable development.

The Relevance of Contemporary Issues in Social Studies Education

The relevance of contemporary issues in social studies education is highlighted as follows:

- **Information for Social Living:** There is excessive development in information and expansion in technology at the global level. The world is becoming a global village, which requires comprehensive information about developments in all countries, in order for countries to improve and strategize policies for improving their economy, technological feat and maintaining sustainable peace and security. Against this background, Mezieobi (2004) remarked that any social studies curriculum that is bereft of contemporary issues is highly irrelevant. This is because it is not emphasizing environmental education and societal needs.

- **Education for Peace Building:** Peace education has become a relevant section of contemporary education. On the place of contemporary issues in maintaining harmonious co-existence in a multi-cultural society as Nigeria, Onyeanusi (2016:100) opined "...diverse multi cultural people of the country need to be (exposed) for respect and tolerance of each other". Contemporary issues help in understanding diverse national and international culture, which is a stimulant to peace building.
- **Dynamism:** The society of man is dynamic with changes. A relevant social studies curriculum has to be reviewed or updated with current events, information and facts. This is to make social studies curriculum apt for solving contemporary challenges and providing resourceful information for competitive global existence. That is to say one is universally socialized.
- **Environmental Education:** Environmental education equips learners with environmental education. Environmental education by emphasis is not only the study of weather and climatic conditions of a place. It encapsulates all activities unfolding in man's environment which are sensitive to his existence. Ezeudu (2003) has maintained that social studies is strategic in projecting environmental education through emphasis on contemporary education.
- **Political, Social, Technological and Scientific Knowledge:** Contemporary issues cover a wide area of knowledge and information. It encompasses everything happening to man. Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2012) rightly pointed out that social studies goals are embracive. In short, contemporary issues through social studies expose political education, social education, technological education and scientific education. These educational values acquaint learners and citizens with social skills and national consciousness to improve the quality of life in their domain.

Strategies of Integrating Contemporary Issues in Social Studies Curriculum

Social studies can integrate contemporary issues in social studies curriculum through the following advanced strategies.

- There is need for urgent and constant review of the social studies curriculum to incorporate dynamic changes and events in the local, national and international societies.
- The application of Information and Communication Technologies in teaching social studies would help to enlarge the information scope and enrich the social studies curriculum content. Obey (2016) in a study advised that students should be encouraged to use Information and Communication Technologies for education purpose. This is to gather enough contemporary issues for their consumption.
- Resource person's utilization in teaching social studies will help in incorporating diverse materials into social studies curriculum.
- Periodic review of textbooks is necessary to provide requisite contemporary contents in social studies education.
- Value clarification strategy should be emphasized in teaching of social studies, this will enable learners adopt value positions to different contemporary issues and events. In addition, project method and discussions will enlarge scope of social studies and improve the learning experiences of learners on contemporary issues.

- Futures wheel instructional strategy, which reports on consequences of events in a chain, will help to expose contemporary and future events.

CONSTRAINTS

The following constraints may frustrate the effective incorporation of contemporary issues in social studies curriculum:

- Social studies curriculum is not periodically reviewed in Nigeria.
- Teachers in their sufficient number are not ICT compliant.
- Schools are not sufficiently equipped with ICT materials.
- Social studies textbooks are not regularly reviewed and incorporated with contemporary information.
- Teachers are not sufficiently exposed to conferences, workshops and seminars to update knowledge on contemporary issues.
- Diversified instructional strategies are not used in teaching social studies. Teachers rely mostly on lecture method which stifles cooperative learning and multiple learning experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper x-rayed the relevance of contemporary issues incorporation in social studies curriculum. It highlighted the strategies ideal for projecting contemporary issues in the teaching of social studies, the constraints are deliberated briefly upon, and conclusion and recommendation are highlighted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The foregoing discourse has stimulated the following recommendations:

- Social studies at all level of instruction in Nigeria need be periodically reviewed, so as to be equipped with contemporary issues.
- Teachers of social studies and students should be exposed to ICT application, so that they can generate contemporary information and resources.
- Teachers ought to be exposed to seminars, workshops and conferences to improve their scope of information.
- Professionally trained social studies experts are encouraged to write books updated with contemporary information, this will help to promote contemporary issues.
- Teachers should be sufficiently exposed to diverse methods of teaching social studies, so as to enlarge learning experiences and expand the scope of information ideal for promoting contemporary issues.

REFERENCES

1. Echefu, O.C. and Onoh, F.O. (2016). *Assessment of the influence of social studies curriculum in projecting contemporary social issues in junior secondary schools in Onicha Local Government Area of Ebonyi State*. Unpublished project, Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
2. Esu, A.E.O. and Dania, P.O. (1999). Educator's perceptions and attitudes towards social studies implementation in Nigeria. *Social Studies Quarterly*, 2(3), 1-6.
3. Ezeudu, S.A. (2003). *Environmental education for sustainable development: A Nigerian perspectives*. Onitsha: Bel's Books.
4. Education International (2014). *Peace education*. Retrieved from www.ei-ie.org/en.
5. Mezieobi, D.I. and Mezieobi, S.A. (2012). *Basic issues in social studies education in Nigeria*. Enugu: Sive Publishers.
6. Mezieobi, K.A. (2004). Social interaction in Nigeria. In K.A. Mezieobi (Ed.) *Concerns and insights in social studies education in Nigeria*. Onitsha: Outrite Publishers.
7. Mezieobi, K.A. (2013). *Contemporary issue in social studies education in Nigeria*. Umuoma Nekede: Priscilla Omama Publishers.
8. Obey, A. (2016). *An investigation into the use of resources among secondary school students in Ahoada East Local Government Area*. Unpublished M.Ed. dissertation, University of Port Harcourt.
9. Onyeansi, O.C. (2016). Democracy and nation building. In D.I. Mezieobi (Ed.) *Nigeria amaka: A path to nation building*. Enugu: Modern Media Publications.
10. Ossai, V.O. (2016). Relevance of peace education in school productivity. In S.O. Oluwuo & J.D. Asodike (Eds.) *Managing schools for productivity emerging perspectives*. Port Harcourt: Pearl Publishers International Ltd.
11. Osakwe, E. (2009). *Navigating the Northern through today's shame to tomorrow's fame: Social studies as pilot*. 17th in the service of inaugural lectures of the Delta State University, Abraka.
12. Uchendu, P.K. (1991). *Contemporary issues in social studies education*. Owerri: Fismen Communication.
13. Ukadike, O.J. and Okobia, O.E. (2006). Using cooperative learning strategies for instruction in primary school. *Nigerian Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 13(3), 89-113.

