
BETWEEN CURRICULUM PLANNING AND TEACHING
EFFECTIVENESS - WHERE IS THE GAP IN SOCIAL
STUDIES PROGRAMMES?

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Abstract

Social Studies development has been a subject of curriculum politics from time immemorial as it had all along attracted the interest of all stakeholders in the education industry. The debate has always been: Is it a simplified form of social sciences, a reflective inquiry, a value-laden promoter or a combination of all the attributes? These mind-bugling questions attracted so much interest such that they have relegated professional and expertise advices to the background. Consequently, as a 'soft-spot' subject, Social Studies becomes a 'ludo' game for all comers. The fact that issues in Social Studies centre around problems of human and environment interactions (which are regarded as socio-current affairs) also make the discipline to be debatable among all categories of citizens. Then came a lot of Presidential directives to water-down the contentious overloaded nature of the subject. The quality of the teachers teaching the subject also became contentious over-time with the country being enmeshed with a lot of value problems. Thus, this paper examined the gap that existed between curriculum planning in Social Studies and its level of teaching effectiveness. The structure of this paper was

based on documentary analyses of the controversies between dysfunctional curriculum and teachers' shortcomings in the implementation of Social Studies programmes in Nigeria. It therefore recommended a better professional handling of the subject through all-inclusive marshal summit guided by the experts.

Key Words: Curriculum Planning, Teaching Effectiveness, Gap, Social Studies Programmes.

Introduction

The doubt on the success of Social Studies programmes in schools is about the gap between curriculum planning and teacher's ineffectiveness. Social Studies as a relatively new subject among the older disciplines like History, Geography, Sociology, Economics, Political Science, Religion etc faces a lot of challenges in curriculum planning and teaching effectiveness. While it is common to blame the teachers for poor students' academic performance and attitudinal dispositions, there is a popular perception that curriculum planning is more of a political activity in Nigeria than a professional act.

According to Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2008) curriculum planning is a process through which the sum total of the objectives, intentions, contents and societal aspirations are taught under the guidance of the school. In Social Studies, the aspiration is for promoting citizenship in Nigeria through the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity; the inculcation of the right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and Nigerian society; the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence both mental and physical as well as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) As a compass for citizenship training, Ogunyemi (2014) submitted that curriculum planning in Social Studies is to produce an all-round individual that would be able to combine the Head, the Heart

and the Hand together for societal development (Ogunyemi, 2006 citing Obanya, 1982).

It is along this path that curriculum planning in Social Studies focuses attention on four dimension of human development thus: Humanistic Education: that helps the learner to understand his life and existence in the environment; Citizenship Education: that prepares the learners for social responsibilities in the society; Intellectual Education: that introduces the learners into critical thinking, self-discovery, analysis and syntheses of information and inquiry mode of research; and Value Education: that inculcates acceptable mode of behaviours and relationship and social feeling in the individual (Akinlaye, 1997:150-162).

All these aspirations for Social Studies notwithstanding, its curriculum planning is loaded with a lot of challenges such as: the dynamics of the society as reflected in different agitations and presidential directives; current youth aspirations and needs; curriculum politicization by allied social science specialists (Being soft-spot for all-comers affairs); new developments and global practices; personalization of curricular content choices; and research outcomes and new theories such as social learning and constructivism. Thus, as well remarked by Ogunyemi (2014) from the thought of Ross and Marker (2009), a key issue in Social Studies curriculum planning is how to wrestle the subject from promoting the status quo and interests of the socially powerful as against transforming and reconstructing the society.

On the other hand, teachers' effectiveness has been a bone of contention over several decades. Yet teachers' factor is the most crucial factor in curriculum implementation. The bone of contention has been that some of the teachers teaching Social Studies teach the subject as mere "integrated Social Studies" rather than "issues-based" reflective discourse. This is why the British Crick report of 1998 and America Contrarians report of 2003 as cited by Adetoro (2019) observed that Social Studies teaching had all along being producing 'backbenchers' 'disengaged generation' with 'historic political disconnection' (Crick Report, 1998)', 'garbage-in-garbage-out' and 'ignorant activism' (America Contrarian Report, 2003). These criticisms as applicable to Nigeria is a reflection of curriculum

summersault due to excessive politicization and teachers' ineffectiveness, whom Ogunyemi (2014) noted were teaching 'hotch-potch of ideas' from 'various unrelated sources'.

Although successful Social Studies teaching has been known to be eclectic in nature leading to the usage of varieties of methods (Adetoro, 2019), but its actual teaching in Nigerian classrooms has been observed to be significantly devoid of students' active participation in learning using field trip and service learning (Ajitomi & Gbadamosi, 2012), cooperative and problem-solving methods (Adeyemi, 2008 & Yusuf, 2007). The fact therefore is that teaching effectiveness as the ability of teachers to foster students' achievements (Ayansiji & Adeniran, 2015) especially in Social Studies has been found to be heavily depended on direct instruction which promotes learning rather than understanding, facts and dissemination rather than application of knowledge (Oyedeji, 2006). Consequently, this paper attempted to expose the gaps between curriculum planning and teaching effectiveness in Social Studies programme in Nigeria. It further proposed novel recommendations on how to bridge the gap between the two critical factors in Social Studies' developmental efforts.

Social Studies Curriculum Planning Process in Nigeria

A curriculum plan is the blueprint for teaching and learning in the classroom. In the views of Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2008), curriculum planning in Social Studies is the process of putting learning activities, experiences, content, methods and mode of students evaluation together in a document. In the planning process, certain pertinent questions are to be addressed-the first of which is curriculum planning for 'what' followed by 'how' and lastly 'to what effect'. What is about the objectives or purposes the curriculum are to serve which according to Abdullahi (2008) is about 'what kind of society do we want for ourselves, for our children and the generations yet unborn' (p.4). Translating this into concrete objectives, Social Studies curriculum planning focuses attention on: helping the learners to fit into the society in which they belong; creating an understanding of the environment-social and political, whether man-made, natural, cultural or spiritual for conservation of resources

for development; developing an awareness and appreciation of the interrelatedness of human knowledge and human life; and developing a capacity for logical thinking and sound rational judgement (Adetoro, 2018 citing Sofadekan, 2012).

The 'how' of curriculum planning is about the content and experiences that are needed for the 'required changes'. Social Studies however has faced a lot of 'adding on' as a result of peoples' complaint about 'youth's misbehaviour' leading to the clamour for 'teach them civics', 'lets add moral instructions', 'lets go back to the teaching of History' being demanded by some stakeholders (Obanya, 2008). These calling for reforms according to Ogunyemi (2014) necessitated the change from 'Civics Education' in the 1970s to 'Citizenship Education' in the late 1980s and back to 'Social Studies' for senior secondary schools that was never implemented since 1985.

These 'patch-patch alterations' also led to the 'jumping the guns' that gave birth to the separation of 'Civic Education' from Social Studies at the Senior Secondary School level, as an 'old wine in a new bottle'. To worsen the confusion was the replacement of Social Studies with the so called 'national values' with the newly introduced History at the primary school level. As argued by Obanya (2008), all these 'hop-step-but-no-jump' amount to 'doing the wrong things for the wrong reasons' with Social Studies being stigmatized for the rottenness of the larger society. Ogunyemi (2014) further asserted that much of the confusion also arose from curriculum politics which is a reflection of a leadership that had 'lost grip of its curriculum compass' (p.31).

To 'what effect' of curriculum planning and implementation in Social Studies also raises a credibility doubt on the values being taught through the subject. Probably this necessitated the replacement of Social Studies with the so called 'Religion and National Values' at the Primary School level. It was after much agitation about 'which religion' are we teaching for our national values that led to the recent separation of Religion from National Values in the Primary School curriculum.

There is no doubt that all human activities (including Social Studies learning) revolves around values (Ogunyemi, 2005) and Omiyefa (2009) who discovered that there is no disagreement among

different categories of teachers and students as to the relevance of Social Studies in the development of pupils' values and moral development. However, recent discoveries by Adetoro (2015) is that the Nigerian youths of nowadays are living with value conflicts in a confused social world.

Indeed, Adetoro (2018) noted the reckless abandonment of dignity and integrity of yester years for current craziness for ill-gotten wealth and criminalities. These according to Omiyefa (2016) are evidently reflecting in drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, computer scam, getting-rich-quick syndrome, laziness, kidnapping and other misplaced value system. All these recent discoveries call for questioning the integrity of the current Social Studies curriculum in schools.

Teachers' Effectiveness in Nigeria

Teachers' factor is very critical to a successful curriculum delivery in schools. Teaching effectiveness is a factor of such variables as effective lesson planning, adequate usage of instructional resources, good content delivery, application of learners' participatory methods, good class control and role modelling, effective multimedia interaction, relevant evaluation and feedback mechanism.

However, the general attitude of Nigerian teachers to teaching has been negative as they see teaching as "the last resort" and "birds of passage" (Akorede & Adigun, 2012). This kind of attitude therefore results in inadequate lesson preparation, delivery and evaluation. According to Akorede and Adigun (2012) some of the teachers see writing of lesson notes and instructional resources preparation as difficult tasks. In the views of Oyededeji (2006), some of the teachers are so lazy to the extent that they hardly read relevant journals, periodicals and daily newspapers. According to him, they hardly update their knowledge of the subject-matter or the pedagogy. Specifically, Okam (2008) observed that most of the Social Studies teachers' methods of teaching are often devoid of inquiry and the use of critical thinking and problem-solving procedures. Idowu (2017) went further to state that Social Studies classroom teaching has been noted in many literature to emphasize 'cognitive domains' with serious neglect of 'affective and psychomotor domains'. This

in the views of Akorede and Adigun (2012) often lead the teachers to commonly ‘paraphrase information from learners’ textbooks’ and ‘provide abstract explanations on Social Studies concepts’.

In a research on prevalence of Social Studies teaching techniques in secondary schools in Kano, Fagge (2016) discovered that none of the thirty-two teachers made use of guided discovery method while teaching Social Studies and only 15.62% of them made use of exhibition and model construction respectively. This happened according to him because only 31.25% of the teachers felt they had adequate skills for utilizing those methods. Hence, 46.8% of the Social Studies teachers submitted that they did not adequately use activity teaching methods in the classroom (Fagge, 2016).

While assessing the role-model skills of Social Studies teachers, Ojo (2008), found that only 20% of one hundred and twenty students could testify that their Social Studies teachers were their best teachers. Furthermore, 30% of the students agreed that their Social Studies teachers didn’t promote honesty while teaching. This was because 60% of the students believed that their Social Studies teachers always followed the school rules and regulations in schools without carrying out the necessary disciplines. Indeed, 90% of the students remarked that special school programmes that could enhance support for discussion on values were not carried-out (Ojo, 2008). All these findings point to the fact that Social Studies teaching in schools are less attractive because they involved little learners’ participation and discoveries.

The Disconnection

The disconnection is between curriculum politicization and the lack of ‘Great Teachers’ in Social Studies. It has been widely observed in literature that curriculum planning in Social Studies has always been a top-bottom approach as in the Presidential directives that led to the disarticulation of Citizenship Education from Social Studies in the late 1980s (Idowu, 2017) and the removal of Civic Education from Social Studies in 2006 (Wahab, 2011). In between these Presidential disruption is the politics of curriculum writing that always attracted non-specialists like Historians, Sociologists, Geographers, Economists, who were often friends to curriculum

designers. The consequence of this always create curriculum riot as evidenced in the last 'Religion and National Values' where Social Studies was subsumed as a theme leading to a lot of protest from the religious bodies.

As if the 'bastardization' of Social Studies curriculum planning was not enough, the issue of the teacher teaching the subject without passion became topical. Whereas without passion, one cannot be a 'Great Teacher'. A 'Great Teacher' in the views of Oyedeki (2006) stands for excellence, innovation and creativity. Such teachers would combine subject expertise with pedagogical competence and professional development. He or she would also have a right attitude and interest, healthy disposition, be a communication expert, motivation expert, a role model, enthusiastic teacher, a counsellor, a manager and an expert evaluator (Oyedeki, 2006). Furthermore, Olayiwola (2020) submitted that such a teacher is the one that creates learning environment with students' active participation, collaborative group works in a safe and healthy situation, cultivates cross-cultural understanding with value of diversity, makes students to accept responsibilities with effective allocation of time for them to engage in hands-on-experience. Consequently therefore, the disconnection debarring the progress of Social Studies programmes in Nigeria has been curriculum planning politics that has been compounded by teachers' ineffectiveness as a result of lack of passion.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Social Studies progress has been obstructed by 'fire brigade' and 'trial by error' curriculum planning which has equally been hijacked by curriculum merchants who feasted on the disruptions without professional interest. These challenges were further compounded by disillusioned curriculum implementers (Social Studies teachers) whose morale is very low leading to ineffective teaching. Thus, the way forward is to bridge the gap between over-politicized curriculum planning and teaching ineffectiveness in Social Studies through all stakeholders marshal summit.

The Way Forward

Social Studies needs the cooperation of all agents of socialization; from the family, the peer-group, Professional Associations, media organizations, policy makers etc. to ensure that the subject is well-respected not as a 'soft spot' for all in curriculum planning and implementation. Curriculum planning in Social Studies should not always be by Presidential directive but from an aggregate inputs from research outcomes, citizens' opinion polls, mass media discoveries, Non-governmental Associations' opinions, teachers and learners' perceptions, Ministry officials and all other stake-holders' feelings.

Writers and designers of curriculum in Social Studies should always be by Professional Social Studies educators teaching across all levels of education. Teachers of Social Studies must be well trained in the content and innovative pedagogies which are learner-centered and community-based with focus on service learning. Efforts should be made to produce abundant 'Great Teachers' among Social Studies educators. Therefore, Social Studies teachers need a lot of retraining workshops and seminars to keep them abreast of global citizenship trend and environmental-cultural dynamism that the subject must inculcate into the students. Such efforts also require mentor-mentee training relationship that is supported with action and applied researches.

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