

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

This paper examined the state of social studies education in Nigeria. Education is an excellent instrument that affects positive changes in any society. For expected changes to occur, the spatial spread of human resources, materials and infrastructures must be a veritable tool to be used. The issues of human resources and infrastructures need to be addressed by stakeholders in the educational sector. The purpose of education is to develop individuals in any society. The challenges that hinder these development in Nigeria are then examined in this paper. These include issues of quality of teaching staff, spatial spread, bad administration, politicization of school, infrastructural facilities and funds. The paper further suggest solutions to these issues raised such as an improve infrastructure stoppage of political interference in schools and even spread of teachers, among others.

Introduction

Contemporary means something existing at the same time, someone living at the same time, from the same time period, coexistent in time (Wikitionary, 2016).

Challenge means a confrontation, an investigation intended to convince a person to perform an action they otherwise would not. Wikitionary define it as a bid to overcome a difficult task, especially one that the person making the attempt finds more enjoyable because of that difficulty

The concept of social studies can be understood within the context of the objectives which underline the philosophy and aims of a society's education. Every country's educational aims and goals are developed to help achieve its national objectives.

Social studies as a discipline tried to emphasize objectively those personal and societal value which are either covered with prejudice or ignored by many other school

subjects in the teaching and learning process. Concepts such as patriotism, loyalty and honesty are never known in content areas of Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics e.t.c. However, social studies is not concerned with either the study of man parse or the study of the society exclusively; it is concerned rather with the study of man within the context of his environment, his social, physical, political, economic, cultural and technological environments. It involves the study of the “what” and “why” of man's activities and his efforts in the society. These generally include what he does and why he does them, what he believes and why he believes them, his problems and how they can be solved. Adarlegbe (1975) describes social studies as a study of how man influences and is in turn influenced by his physical, social, political, religious, economics, psychological environment

National Teachers Institute (2000) believed that social studies is the process of education, which emphasize the relationship human being have with their

physical and social worlds. Matugae (1992) observed that social studies touches the very heart of society. It deals with the unprecedented problems of a national unity and economic development of international understanding and ethnic tolerance, he further went on to opine that social studies can play a major role in the successful implementation of over political goals, provide students with the skills they require for particulate citizenship for participation political democracy, for political literacy and for social responsibility. Social studies has also been described in Utilities the Dictionary of Education as

The study of history, geography, civics, sociology, economics, and other social-science subjects especially in primary and secondary school, which are regarded as suitable for study in elementary and secondary schools and are developed into course of study the content and aims are predominantly social.

In other words, social studies does the job of sitting relevant knowledge from the social science discipline in order to better understand man and his interaction with his complex environment.

Michaelis (1968) describes social studies as a discipline that encompassing those aspects of History and the Social sciences that are believed to be of greatest value for the generation education on students in elementary and secondary school. Michaelis diffusion of social studies suggests that attention should be given primarily and political activities of the past, present and emerging future his place, both near and far away.

Importance of social Studies

1. Social studies help the learner to fit into the society which he belongs.
2. It creates an understanding of environment social and physical resources and the conservation of these resources for development.
3. It develops an awareness and appreciation for the interrelatedness of human knowledge and human life.
4. Social studies develop a capacity to learn and acquire skills for the formation of satisfactory professional life.
5. It develops a capacity for logical thinking and sound rational judgment.

Education is the act of imparting general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and generally preparing oneself intellectually for nature life. The importance of education to human beings cannot be overemphasized. Globally, considered as a human right that should be accorded to all human beings, in facts, it was the reason, why a lot of international human right bodies consider educational as a fundamental human right. Resources mean something that one uses to achieve an objective, such as availability of qualified teachers, infrastructural such as buildings, lockers, libraries, ICT equipments e.t.c.

Quality of Teaching Staff

Competent teachers are committed to their students and student learning, possess deep subject matter knowledge, effectively manage and monitor student learning and reflective about their teaching, and are members of the broader school community (National Research Council, 2001).

Social studies students learning relate with a number of teacher characteristics of which their qualities is a prime factor, the

determination of how students learn is social studies classroom. Teacher quality assessment community includes review of qualifications of practice and measurement of students learning gains. This implies that teacher quality goes beyond certificate held in education such as the NCE, B.Ed, PGDE degrees qualification that seems to measure teacher's quality.

The term “quality teachers” is defined by Grayson (2009) to mean a teacher who has the following qualities

- i. A minimum of bachelor's degree
- ii. State certificate or License
- iii. Demonstrates subject area competence in all subject area he or she teaches

Based on the conceptualization by Grayson (2009) teacher quality relates to the teaching abilities of the teacher. Hence, it is assumed that teaching quality refers not only to the teachers' credentials but also to the perspective teachers bring to the classroom, the instructional strategies that they use and the surrounding organisation of the social community.

Peretomode (2001) describes teacher quality based on his effectiveness in the classroom. In his view, a good teacher should be able to recognise the cognitive affective and psychomotor domain of a child's development. This implies that teacher's quality could be measured to the extent to which they are able to apply their training to students. This is because the qualities of a teacher revolve round his traits and specialization.

Unqualified Teacher

The unqualified teacher in most cases is a result of graduates from the universities in other fields of learning using teaching as a

springboard to other jobs. These categories of persons come into teaching using the Nigeria factor of “godfatherism”. This has posed serious problems to education in the country. In fact many teachers do not know how to teach because most of them teach social studies on instructions from their principals feeling that social studies is a simple subject which anybody can teach. This led to the establishment of the teacher registration council in order to checkmate the inflow of or incoming teachers. No doubt, the above points reviewed have shown teacher characteristics that might improve the quality of social studies teacher.

Spatial Spread of social studies teacher

A study in spatial spread of teacher is important because (Owoeye & Yara 2012) observed that lack of suitable school location contribute to unbalances of Western Education from one part of the country to the other. Their observation points to the fact that uneven spread of teachers is capable of affecting education practices in the country. This indicates that uneven spread of teachers is a potent factor that could affect the national goals of education in Nigeria.

Onokerhoraye (1976) cited by Owoeye et al (2011) identified criteria responsible for the uneven spread of social studies teachers in the country. These include

- i. Settlement pattern of school
- ii. Access to provision of social amenities
- iii. Location of school
- iv. Size of a community.
- v. Community development e.t.c

The influence these variables have on social studies teachers is enormous. This could account for uneven spatial spread of social studies teachers in some states in Nigeria. This fact is shown in the attitudes of teachers

who naturally, will evade going to locations where the population is too low to support the infrastructure and social services as teachers are often reluctant to live in such area as a result, schools located in them often suffer from shortage of teachers for those reasons, teachers are attracted to areas with large settlement than fewer settlements.

The spread of teachers in Nigeria seems to lack a coherent patterns restating to induce experience of uneven distribution of teachers. Adeyemi (2009) agreed with the notion that pattern of distribution of teachers has generated mixed feelings among many educationist. The implication is that the general public has shown concern on how teachers are being spread into schools and as such, it has become a social problem among stakeholders in the educational sector.

Ikoya (2008) also believed that the common practiced where married female teachers served in their husband stations is capable of affecting the uneven distribution of teachers. According to him, the consequence is that most schools will suffer from the services of such married female teachers.

Bad Administration

Bad Administration by Heads/Teachers, the undue charges from school heads and its teachers in the various primary and secondary schools in the country, it is now a common practice, by heads and teachers to surcharge students in different ways that are not accountable for, purchase of reading materials and other learning materials at exorbitant rate has hinders education because most pupils/students who cannot afford it drops out of school which eventually lowering academic performance.

In fact, poor school records, management and lack of staff development are also constraints of social studies education in Nigeria.

Politicization of school

The problem of educational development in Nigeria is that of responsibility and control, the conflict between the federal, state and local government in the management of education at various levels is one of the prominent problems of educational development in Nigeria. The control of primary education is neither fully in the hand of federal government, nor state or local government. Thus, creating a great barrier for effective educational development at basic level.

Secondly, the unstopped /unfavourable condition of teachers in Nigeria primary / secondary schools has drastically crippled the educational system at these level, in a situation where teachers are not paid for six months leads to how teachers looks for alternative means to the determinant of their profession.

Another area that crippled the development of education in the country is the way and manner politician's interference or influence the recruitment exercise of teachers has led recruitment of many unqualified teachers in our schools. The problem is about individual group quest for ethnic and religious heterogeneous in a multi-cultural diverse country like Nigeria. The quest of multiculturalism is to build a society where within the philosophy of meritocracy individuals are given what they deserve.

In Nigeria today, evidence abound that vice chancellors, provosts and Rectors as well as other education managers such as principals and Headmasters are motivated by primordial factors.

This situation reveals itself to the extent that today certain positions must be kept for the indigenous people of the institutions host communities. If the positions are occupied by non-indigenes, the process of institutional governance / administration becomes frustrated in some circumstances, they go to the length of watering down the criteria for recruitment in order to accommodate their primordial interest, which is never healthy for the development of education in Nigeria, because it excludes those who merited the positions (Lenshe, 2012). According to him, another factor indicts such practices is that when primordial identities become prominent, established rules seize to function. The system of rewards and punishment are determined by primordial considerations or informal conventions. In such institutions, multiple layers of red tapes are created and the consequences of being caught and punished for corrupt practices are low relatively to the benefits.

Infrastructural Facilities

School facilities are the material resource that facilitate effective teaching and learning in schools. Jaigeoba and Atandra (2013) stated that infrastructures are things which enable a skillful teacher to achieve effectiveness that exceeds what is possible when they are provided. Vanguard 21st December, 2013 says poor infrastructure is one of the major problems facing our schools. According to vanguard, there has been over the last two decades an upsurge of students population in almost all Nigeria schools, while no additional / repairs of infrastructures in the schools. In that same 21st vanguard 2013, it also spoke on a glossary of the infrastructural decay is alarming as Saturday vanguard investigation showed while according to Edukugho (28th December, 2013), spoke on public universities, the most vital segment of the

country's tertiary education system had been closed down for about six months due to strike by members of the academic staff union of Universities (ASUU) over sundry issues including poor infrastructures. He further highlighted the decay in tertiary education infrastructure, cutting across polytechnics, colleges of education and public universities had become monumental, threatening the very existence of those institutions. According to him poor infrastructure is one of the major problems facing tertiary education in Nigeria, the failure of our national development is due to the low priority accorded to lack of conducive environment to teach and transmit applied knowledge which is fundamental to success, development and progress in life (Edukugho, 2013).

Late Prof. Festas Iyayi in an interview with Sunday vanguard (29th December, 2013) advice federal government to set up a committee called 'NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE' that went round the Nigerian universities and what they found was shocking first, that student teacher ratio was 1-400 instead of 1-40 of the National Policy statement, classrooms were grossly inadequate standing in their lecture theatres while others writing on their backs even found lecturers holding lectures under trees in some of the universities, found people using kerosene stores stove instead of burners to conduct experiment, specimens being kept in pure water bottles instead of the appropriate places where such specimens should be kept. President Goodluck Jonathan on getting the report was embarrassed, sad that he did not know that things were as bad as that.

Availability of infrastructures and facilities in the right quantity and quality is related in educational provision. Adegun (2001), lack

of building, inadequate classrooms and facilities such as chairs, lockers, libraries, textbooks, laboratories, and workshop will be uncomfortable for pupils / students to learn. Unfortunately, there are inadequate infrastructures and facilities in many primary / secondary schools in Nigeria.

The impact of poor infrastructures on education

Poor infrastructure has crippled Nigerian education negatively. This is true because whenever education is poorly handed, it affects all areas of life most especially our economy.

Cynado & Ezeogide quoted Osioma (2012) X-ray the decadence and danger in education in Nigeria according to him, he noted that;

Yet another obvious area of decline in education in Nigeria today can be in quality and quantity of the teaching staff in our schools. Times, there was when men and women attracted into teaching profession were the cream of the crop. They were then the best both in character and in learning. Today it is no longer so, the truth of the matter is that there is more cheating than teaching going on in the school today. Men who entered teaching practically as missionaries have left the arena.

According to him, teachers now embark on means of making money to better their standard of living. He further laid blames on the government's attitude and policy as contributing factors for the lapse in the educational standard.

Fund

Fund means a sum or source of money for the maintenance of under privileged students. The possibilities of getting enough funds to effect changes in the social studies primary /

secondary school education in Nigeria is a threat, lack of fund to provide necessary human and non-human resources or to sponsor teachers to workshops or recruit new teachers who are expected to implement social studies curriculum, pose a problem.

It is worthy of note that UNECSO has recommended the allocation of 29% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of each country in the world to education. It will not be too much if this standard is attained in Nigeria by government, it is disheartening to note that the government failed to keep to UNESCO's recommendation who is the major financier of education in the country which has affected the education system, and this has lead to the collapse of primary / secondary education in Nigeria. Leaufe commission of 1991 observed that the percentage of recurrent budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria has never exceeded 10%, revealing the underfunding by government. Fund is the greatest challenge facing Nigeria education and making it difficult for quality education which is capable of bringing sustainable development. This revealed that Nigeria has never met UNESCO recommendation of 29% of GDP for education to move it forward, sustainable amount of fund must be allocated to education to meet the provision of human and non-human resources which is the greatest challenges facing Nigeria's education.

Way Forward

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

- (1) Schools should be well staffed with social studies teachers and well equipped.
- (2) Social studies teachers should be adequately spread round the states.

- (3) There is need for adequate fund to maintain both the human and material resources of the system in order to achieve quality education.
 - (4) There is also the need for effective monitoring of the management of fund to ascertain that the present fund allocated is well utilized.
 - (5) There is need for frequent supervision by inspectors from ministry of education; this will checkmate the teachers to be up and doing.
 - (6) More professionally trained social studies teachers who can equip students with the necessary concepts of social studies and cultural heritage, values, desirable attitudes, needed for the young Nigerian youths to move Nigeria forward.
 - (7) Stakeholders in the educational sector should be given auctioning during recruitment exercise in order to stop politicians from interfering or sponsoring unqualified persons into the educational system.
 - (8) Government should be prompt in payment of salary of teachers in the primary / secondary schools.
 - (9) There is need for quality assurance in terms of class size, number of teachers student's ratio and instructional materials.
 - (10) There is need for proper governance of schools and implementation of schools management Committees (SMEs).
 - (11) There is need for adequate budgetary provision to meet UNESCO's recommendation of 29% (GDP).
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