

Strategy for Enhancing National Capacity Building in Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development: An Inquiry into Federal Colleges of Education in North-Central Zone of Nigeria

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Abstract

The study sought to find out strategies for enhancing national capacity building in Social Studies Education for sustainable development in Federal Colleges of Education in North-Central Zone of Nigeria. Fifteen Social Studies lecturers and 345 students drawn through a multi-stage sampling technique constituted the sample of the study. Eight - item structured questionnaire was the instrument used to seek information for the study. One research question was raised and one null hypothesis formulated for the study. The study employed the mean score and t-test statistic in analyzing the data. The findings revealed among others that the strategies for enhancing capacity building in Social Studies Education include training in proper utilization of ICT - aided instruction and other best pedagogy and incentive through improved funding of research. It therefore recommends that Social Studies teachers should be trained to be ICT compliant in their service delivery and the programme should be adequately funded and be made more attractive.

Keywords: national capacity building, strategy, social studies education, sustainability, development

INTRODUCTION

The National Policy on Education (NPE) and the national philosophy for education in Nigeria recognizes the need for Social Studies Education in capacity building for young citizens for national development. The subject (Social Studies Education) was adopted in Nigeria about 52 years ago as a result of the quest for relevance in the Nigerian education system. Social Studies in several nations of the world are essentially introduced to meet certain specific needs and aspirations of the people. In Britain for instance, Social Studies was introduced into the school curriculum after the First and Second World Wars as panacea for social problems (Ediyang and Ubi, 2013).

The Nigerian society is not an exception. This however partly explains why Social Studies have been given a pride of place in Nigerian education industry. The corruption-free, humane, moral and integrated society which Nigeria is craving for cannot be achieved without a sound foundation as well as instruction in Social Studies. Social Studies as a unique discipline is committed to transmitting and forming the values of citizens in any society. Social Studies has come to be accepted as a course of study in most colleges of education in Nigeria that should assist NCE (Nigeria

Certificate in Education) graduates to acquire the basic knowledge, skills and positive attitudes needed to be responsible and reliable citizens which has over a period of time enhanced national capacity building (Alberta, 2000).

Social Studies Education touches on all aspects of societal development – political, economic, social, spiritual, cultural, technological or educational. In the Nigerian context, the goal of Social Studies curriculum is designed at building a sound and balanced mind as a foundation for functional social education towards the development of intelligent, responsible and self-directing citizens. Integrating and dispensing social knowledge through the instrumentality of Social Studies curriculum designed for NCE Undergraduate in Colleges of Education according to Garb, Yusuf and Saad (2012) is directed towards the following:

- i. Self – confidence and initiative;
- ii. Power of imagination and resourcefulness;
- iii. Desire for knowledge and continued learning;
- iv. Sense of compassion for the less fortunate;
- v. Social values and attitudes such as: cooperation, participation, interdependence, open-mindedness, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, diligence and obedience;
- vi. Sense of respect for and tolerance of the opinion of others; and

- vii. A spirit of national consciousness and patriotism.

Capacity is the ability to understand or do something, and building is an increase in the amount of something over a period of time. Building capacity in Social Studies Education requires the conscious effort or attempt at upgrading, renovating and acquiring skills, abilities and strategies that must increase consistently over time and enable Social Studies teachers react appropriately to academic dynamics including professional training, lesson delivery, effective use of instructional materials, teachers communication skills, provision of effective role model, effective discipline and students' control, improved conditions of service and most importantly quality of classroom assessment to determine the needs of learners in the learning process.

The position of Social Studies Education in promoting sustainable national development is basic as it provides insights and critical thinking skills needed to combat poverty and destitutions, crime and disharmony, and pave the way for an egalitarian society. However, Opoh and Edinyang (2014: 145) have raised some fundamental questions which tend to assess how much the subject has fulfilled this onerous task thus:

- a) What has been happening to poverty?
- b) What has been happening to unemployment?
- c) What has been happening to inequality?
- d) What gave rise to high profile corruption in the society?
- e) Why the high rate of insecurity?
- f) Why such intimidating injustice in the society?
- g) Why corrupt public officials are not properly prosecuted?

The answers to these questions are bare to the face. Hence, Uduokpong (1998), and Opoh and Edinyang (2014) have rightly noted that an enormous gap exist between intended changes and actual practices in Social Studies Education in Nigeria; and that the country lacks a clear direction for the purpose, method and content of teaching the subject that would have addressed the nation's many developmental challenges. This study is therefore significant as it calls for reorientation and reorganization through a capacity building strategy in the training process and retention of trained personnel in Social Studies Education.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Social Studies Education

Social Studies as a discipline of offering in Nigeria's educational system have over the years been subjected to a variety of definitions which in most cases have been quite restrictive in focus and content. For instance, majority of the earliest practitioners of

the subject have defined it as an amalgamation of the arts and social sciences in terms of History, Geography, Political Science, and Sociology. This perspective of Social Studies has been seriously contended by recent scholars (Lawal, 1992; Utulu, 2010, and Ahmad, 2013). Again the varying professional backgrounds of those handling the subject before have equally affected the variety of definitions of the subject. Social studies is the study of man's mutual interaction with his physical, social, political, religious, economic, psychological and cultural environment (Adaralegbe (1980) in O Gundare, 2010). Social studies Education is a subject that deals with various kinds of social relationships needed for better understanding of social living. It is one of the school subjects directed at developing ways in which educational policies can help to create a better world, by contributing to sustainable human development, mutual understanding among peoples and a renewal of practical democracy (Arisi, 2013).

National Capacity Building

The term 'capacity' has been defined as the ability of individuals, organizations and systems to perform appropriate functions efficiently, effectively and sustainably. Thus, national capacity building mean the way individuals, groups, institutions and societies strengthen their abilities to, on one hand, perform core functions, solve problems and formulate and achieve objectives, and on the other hand, to understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner (UNESCO, 2006). National capacity building in Social Studies Education therefore has to do with a process where individuals, groups, networks, organization within the Social Studies discipline and the wider social science community are encouraged and facilitated in enhancing their knowledge and skills so as to increase their ability to perform innovative and high quality social research

Strategy

A strategy is a plan on how or ways of getting things done. It is a pattern of action over time. Strategy can also be described as a position or perspective that reflects decisions or direction to approach a particular task, a challenge or an issue.

Sustainable Development

Development is a term used to refer to event or incident that causes a situation to change or progress. It is a process of changing and becoming better. Development indicates a change from one state to another to the extent that the new state is different from the former in terms of characteristics (Enem, 2007). Development implies both qualitative and quantitative change. Sustainable development ordinarily means economic development maintained

within acceptable levels of global resource depletion and environmental pollution.

Social Studies Education for sustainable national development therefore complements as well as incorporates quite a number of other fields ranging from environmental education, global and economic education, conservation education, to multicultural and global change education among others. In this wise, the Social Studies teacher makes considerable contribution to sustainable national development by the educational objectives emphasized when selecting the content and learning experiences for students to study. This is especially true in choosing contents that influences the areas of knowledge to be learnt, and the skills and attitudes to be developed.

The Problem

The NCE Social Studies is a programme designed to train and produce qualified teachers to dispense Social Studies curriculum at the pre-primary, lower and middle basic levels of education in Nigeria. Experience has shown that students' enrolment into the Social Studies Programme has continuously been on the increase. However, like other subject disciplines in Colleges of Education, Social Studies is offered as Single Major in combination with other school subjects such as History, Geography, Economics, the Religious Studies, and the Languages (very few offer it as Double Major). The resultant effect is brain drain whereby many NCE Graduates do not further their studies in Social Studies Education. Even when they proceed further, they are mostly found in other walks of life other than teaching. It is a wonder that with the monumental turn-out of NCE graduates in Social Studies, most teachers of Social Studies are from other subject disciplines. This study therefore seeks to determine strategies to develop national capacity building in the discipline, particularly in Colleges of Education in North-Central Nigeria.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study is to determine strategies for enhancing national capacity building in Social Studies Education for sustainable development in Nigeria. It therefore seeks to answer the following question:

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What strategies can be adopted to enhance national capacity building in Social Studies Education in Federal Colleges of Education in North-Central Nigeria?

HYPOTHESIS

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of students of Social Studies and

those of Social Studies lecturers on the strategies for enhancing national capacity building in Social Studies Education in Federal Colleges of Education in North-Central Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. It is taken to be appropriate for this study because Osuala (2005) saw it as a design, which studies a population through a sample in order to determine the status of a given phenomenon. The population of the study comprised of the four Federal Colleges of Education (FCE) in the zone which include all the Social Studies lecturers and their students.

Through a multi-stage sampling technique, two FCEs were randomly selected, out of which fifteen lecturers and three hundred and forty-five students constituted the sample for the study.

The instrument for data collection was a researcher developed questionnaire titled "Strategies for Enhancing National Capacity Building in Social Studies Education in Nigeria Questionnaire (SENCBSSNQ)". The instrument was made up of two sections. Section A sought demographic data regarding respondents' name of school and level of qualification. Section B consists of eight items on which the respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their opinion on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (Very High (VH) - 4 points; Agree (High (H) - 3 points; Disagree (Low (L) - 2 points; and Strongly Disagree (Very Low (L) - 1 point.

The instrument was face validated by three experts in School of Arts and Social Sciences, FCT, COE, Zuba. For reliability, a pilot test was carried out using three lectures and forty students drawn from those not included in the sample. A Cronbach Alfa reliability test for internal consistency of the items yielded a coefficient of 0.73.

The questionnaire was personally administered to the respondents by the researcher with the help of two research assistants who are also colleagues. In analyzing the generated data, mean and standard deviation was used to analyze the two research questions, while t-test was used to test the stated hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What strategies can be adopted to enhance national capacity building in Social Studies Education in Federal Colleges of Education in North-Central Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean ratings of the respondents’ opinion on strategies for enhancing national capacity building in Social Studies Education

S/N	Items	Lecturers (N = 15)			Students (N = 345)		
		X	SD	Deci	X	SD	Deci
1.	Implementation of Social Studies curriculum in senior secondary schools will enhance National capacity building in Social Studies Education in Nigeria.	2.20	0.86	L	2.74	1.77	H
2.	Continuous research orientation will enhance capacity building in Social Studies Education in Nigeria.	2.01	0.70	VL	2.00	0.77	VL
3.	Professional growth encouraged through training and retraining workshops and seminars will enhance capacity building in Social Studies Education in Nigeria.	2.00	0.93	VL	2.00	0.77	VL
4.	A national policy framework to ensure that only Social Studies trained professionals teach Civic and Social Studies Education will enhance national capacity building in Social Studies Education in Nigeria.	1.87	0.64	VL	3.02	0.15	H
5.	Incentive through Improved funding of research will enhance capacity building in Social Studies Education.	3.47	0.52	VH	2.68	0.65	H
6.	Training in proper utilization of ICT aided instruction and other best pedagogy will enhance capacity building in Social Studies in Nigeria.	3.07	0.59	VH	3.02	0.15	VH
7.	Curbing all forms of examination malpractices in the Colleges will enhance capacity building in Social Studies Education in Nigeria.	1.66	0.72	VL	1.96	0.41	VL
8.	Encouraging publishing of Social Studies textbooks by professionals via grants and interventions will enhance capacity building in Social Studies Education in Nigeria.	1.47	0.74	VL	1.94	0.41	VL

Source: Field survey (2014)

The data on table 1 indicates that items 2, 3, 7, and 8 were rated low by both lecturers and students. Items 5 and 6 were rated high by both categories of respondents. The only observed point of divergence or disagreement is in items 1 and 4 with mean scores of 2.20 and 1.87 for lecturers disagreeing that implementation of Social Studies curriculum in senior secondary schools will enhance National capacity building in Social Studies Education in Nigeria and a national policy framework to ensure that only Social Studies trained professionals teach

Civic and Social Studies Education will enhance national capacity building in Social Studies Education

in Nigeria respectively. The students on the other hand agree on this with the mean scores of 2.74 and 3.02. However, the measure of variability for both respondents is minimal and so also is the difference in inter-individual opinion implying that the respondents holds similar opinion in each group

Table 2: T-test analysis of the difference between the mean score of students and lecturers on the factors affecting national capacity building in Social Studies Education in Nigeria

Groups	N	X	SD	Df	Level of significance	Calculated value	Critical t-value	Decision
Students	345	2.36	0.49	358	0.05	1.29	1.96	Ho is accepted
Lecturers	15	2.14	0.70					

Table 3 shows that the calculated value of 1.29 is less than the table value of 1.96 at 358 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the opinions of the two groups. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The data presented has revealed that both students and lecturers hold the views that continuous research orientation training and retraining workshops and

seminars is not the main strategies to enhance national capacity building in Social Studies Education in Nigeria. However, they are of the opinion that incentive through improved funding of research and training in proper utilization of ICT - aided instruction and other best pedagogy will enhance capacity in Social Studies Education in the zone. This finding is in-line with Mezieobi (2007: 135) when he noted that it is the primary essential challenge of university (colleges of education)

lecturers to update the image of Social Studies through credible, worthy research efforts and the institutionalization of continuous published journals and researches in line with modern societal needs and aspirations, in this global information communication technologies (ICTs) era. This view is further buttressed by Nwachukwu (2004) that there is need for a continuous revision of Social Studies curriculum of our universities (colleges) in a radical form to educate their products to be able to cope with the trends and demands of the information society.

There is also an observed discrepancy between lecturers and students' opinion on the implementation of Social Studies curriculum in senior secondary schools and providing a national policy framework to ensure that only Social Studies trained professionals teach Social Studies and Civic Education as strategies to enhance national capacity building in Social Studies Education in Nigeria. This perhaps may be due to a feature of Social Studies historical background in which many of the experts have their initial training in other social science disciplines (Philip-Ogoh and Abdus-Salam, 2014). In other words, the lecturers (who are mostly non-Social Studies Specialists) would rather maintain the status-quo as opposed to the up-coming undergraduate who are purely Social Studies Specialists.

Also the low opinion expressed by both lecturers and students on other strategies suggested such as continuous research orientation; professional growth encouraged through training and retraining workshops and seminars; curbing all forms of examination malpractices in the Colleges; and encouraging publishing of Social Studies textbooks by professionals via grants and interventions explains respondents' priority needs reflects the fact that these issues are not less important but the most important of them is funding and training in information and communications technologies. Training in ICTs – aided instruction is considered a better strategy perhaps because of the population of student enrolment in Social Studies which is usually very high (Udoh, 1981; Mezieobi, 1991; and Ker, 2006).

A very salient point which the findings have revealed, one which cannot be ignored, is the desire of student – teachers to see Social Studies curriculum being implemented in secondary schools in Nigeria. This tends to agree with views expressed by Opo, Edinyang and Ogbaji (2014) that as useful as the subject is to the moral and intellectual development of the child as well as the acquisition of necessary skills for nation building, there has been a gap in the Nigeria Social Studies curriculum. The subject is offered in the primary and junior secondary schools but not offered at the senior secondary level, making it difficult for proper shift from the secondary to the tertiary level of education. This perhaps explains the

recent implementation of Civic Education at senior secondary level of education in the country.

IMPLICATION OF THE FINDINGS

The study has revealed the need to improve funding of research in Social Studies. It also goes to show that there is need to integrate ICT programme in Social Studies Education programmes of Colleges of Education, such that students are equipped with skills of information location, research and capability of maintenance of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) material and thereby enhance capacity building in the subject. Another implication is that it reveals the need to professionalize the subject discipline of Social Studies in order to minimize the porosity of entry point (admission and recruitment).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social Studies Education has been identified as a veritable tool that has facilitated the attainment of sustainable development goals and poverty alleviation through the production of responsible citizens armed with the necessary skills and capabilities, attitudes and values and contributing maximally to national growth. Although there have been observed gaps between intended changes and the actual practice thereby making the attainment of the objectives optimally somewhat elusive. However, evolving national capacity building strategies (as revealed has shown) in the subject would ensure sustainable development and alleviate poverty in the country.

Based on the discussion, implications and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. The government should fund research in Social Studies Education so that new frontiers for national development and growth and poverty alleviation may be discovered.
2. Information and communications technologies (ICTs) instructional methods should be integrated into Social Studies curriculum and lecturers should be trained on the effective utilization of ICT in their classroom interaction for sustainable development and ameliorate the poverty level Nigeria.
3. Government and indeed stakeholders in the field should review the entry requirements for admission into tertiary Social Studies as well as recruitment of its teachers in such a way that it would be subject-specific like other social science disciplines. This way the subject would be implemented bearing in mind its goals and objectives especially for sustainable development and poverty alleviation.
4. All observed gaps in the implementation of Social Studies Education should be filled through the necessary political, administrative and

professional goodwill and commitment (Jekayinfa, 2005).

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