

Agenda for a Transformative Implementation of Social Studies Curriculum in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

A functional transformative social studies curriculum will be ideal for equipping learners with contemporary requisite values, attitudes, skills and knowledge that are substantial to withstand national and global challenges of man. By this standard, a high measure of professional input should be made in the content and implementation process of social studies curriculum in Nigerian universities, given that the National Universities Commission approved programme is yet to undergo major review and revision since 1989. Potential ways of making social studies curriculum implementation transformative in Nigerian Universities are as follows: inculcation of entrepreneurial education, integration of poverty alleviation education, qualitative teaching, climate impact education and emphasis on values education strategies for actualizing this noble mission are: qualitative training of lecturers, regular revision of curriculum, appraisal of lecturers and students performance, collaborative instruction and active support in funding social studies education research. Possible constraints are hazarded.

Introduction

The essence of social studies education in Nigerian universities is to project eclectic knowledge suitable for addressing the problem of man in a fast changing transforming globe. In order that any educational experience and experiment to be viable, the recipients need to be equipped with contemporary knowledge and skills to remain competitive, viable, meaningfully survive with the challenges and pressures of the time. Against this background, the content, implementation process and the viability of social studies graduates in terms of fitting productively into the labour market and needs be periodically appraised as a measure of providing facts, data and information to institute a viable social studies education curriculum that is in line with national transformation agenda which connotes achieving practical results in education investment.

Irrespective of the introduction and existence of formal social studies education on a national scale in Nigeria for the past twenty-nine years, all is not well with the operationalization of the curriculum of social studies (Mezieobi & Mezieobi, 2012:132). The drive towards re-engineering the process of teaching and learning (social studies) education in our (Nigerian universities) has become very imperative especially in the fact of dwindling level of national consciousness, social harmony and patriotic zeal. Nigeria is currently facing the problem of youth incivility and immorality (Ogunbiyi & Soluade, 2011), including religious violence, environmental management, ethnic, conflict and pervasive level of unemployment, that can be mitigated through self reliant education, by overhauling the content of Nigerian universities social studies curriculum.

If social studies education that has to address (contemporary national and global) issues is not properly repositioned, the efforts will be in vain (Mezieobi & Onyeanus, 2012). It is unarguable fact that entrepreneurship education (integrated in social studies programme of Nigerian universities) if appropriately applied will invariably lead to creation of more jobs and to a large extent eradicate the high level of poverty, unemployment and crime prevalent in our society. The benefit will definitely boost the level of economic growth and development of the country (Orisa, 2012). This is because social studies education graduates will acquire skills and values for self reliant existence and mechanism for wealth creation through involvement in diverse economic ventures for their personal enhancement and national advancement. The objective focus of this study is to insightfully deliberate on agenda for actualizing transformative social studies education

curriculum implementation in Nigerian universities, strategies to facilitate the process and mitigating constraints envisaged.

Conceptual framework

Social studies is a reformatory school instruction designed to equip learners with desirable attitudes, values, skills and knowledge for cohesive social existence in Nigerian society (Mezieobi, 2011). Social studies curriculum should transformatively be adjusted in its contents, pedagogies and objectives very frequently to accommodate contemporary changes, challenges and progress stride of nations and the global communities at large.

Social studies as a field of study was introduced in Nigeria with the aim of inculcating in the students some (functional) knowledge, skills as well as values and attitudes that will enable the students fit into and contribute to the progress and well-being of the society to which they belong (Fibianmine, 2011), a transformative social studies curriculum is configured to develop human persons, in order they make viable input and contributions towards averting the tasking challenges of their nations in establishing democratic leadership, achieving harmonious social co-existence, environmental sustainability, technological advancement for improved standard of living, economic growth through their productive input, consideration for meaningful utilization of nations resources for the general good of all citizens, its management and accountable utilization of national resources for improvement of social and physical infrastructure for stable economic growth, enthronement of democratic stability, peace and assured formidable national security which creates the environment for steady growth and development of the economy.

Social studies transformative education agenda is installed to yield positive results to the improvement for the economy through the productive development of human potentials, who can contribute ideas, opinions, materials and facts for addressing Nigeria's present challenges. However, (Nigerians) profess academic excellence only at the theoretical formulation without adequate commitment to its realization (Mezieobi & Torunrigha, 2012:32). Emenyonu (1983) courageously postulate that Nigeria is capable of sustaining a functional stable educational system (for transforming the economic, social, technological and political structure of the Nigerian society-through functional social studies education programme Nigerian universities) if only we would stop paying lip service to education. It is therefore a high time, government and political actors should fund research and provide enabling environment and materials to assist universities train social studies graduates who would offer greatest assistance and facilitate general economic growth, human relations education for peaceful co-existence of the plural ethnic societies of Nigeria, who live in mutual suspicious interaction, interdependence and persistent conflict threatening the foundations of Nigeria's security and political stability, including a sustainable economic development viability.

The Nigerian universities social studies curriculum would be transformative when it adapts contents to contemporary challenges, equips learners with skills for wealth creation that can train graduates to resolve critical impending social problems. It is expected that the curriculum should continuously be enlarged and to address the following national needs:

Entrepreneurial education: Ojukwu (2001) observes that inculcation of national entrepreneurial education in (social studies) programme of universities is directed at human capital development and the provision of adequate supply of trained entrepreneurs with motivational force to move the economy in varying perspectives. Bolarinwa in Orisa (2012) observed that entrepreneurship education equips graduates with self reliant training, skills, knowledge, experience and competences to be relevant to national development.

Poverty alleviation education: According to Ojie (2007:14) "...Nigeria is clearly one of the typical countries of the sub-Saharan African which is saddled with the problem of poverty reduction, alleviation and education". In other words, poverty alleviation education, (integration into social studies programme of Nigerian universities) is aimed at eradication the level of poverty in the country as Nigeria and other countries, by exposing learners on the acquisition of values for self reliance, discipline, honesty, hard work, creativity and creative discoveries to improve the national economy (Mezieobi & Njoku, 2012:).

(Social studies education) is the science of doing or making (creative ideas, social inventions and objects)...that will enable man interact with (and contribute productively to his) environment (development) efficiently (Orisa, 2011). It is the place of social studies education to ensure that graduands are orientated to be resourceful for national development through making profound contributions to national development in response to current challenges of the nation in the technological, social, economic and political sphere. For instance, there are security challenges, environment depletion, food crisis, youth restiveness and militancy, ingrained ethnic consciousness, robust food crisis, leadership instability, electoral violence among others that require solution input from the social studies education stake holders.

Qualitative teaching: the implementation of social studies curriculum in the Nigerian universities for effective production of resourceful social studies graduates requires integration of content, pedagogies and use of resource persons for specific skills inculcation. Furthermore, social studies (lecturers) should be more pragmatic and

radical in their teaching...social studies educators should make their discipline more saleable and relevant (Osakwe, 2012:12), to societal compelling needs and aspirations.

Climate change impact education: climate change is a threatening national and global agenda that need be urgently integrated and emphasized in Nigerian universities social studies curriculum for awareness, sensitization and inculcation of skills to withstand the consequences of pressure exerted by climate change impact on the environment, such as excessive flooding, food scarcity, displacement of persons and communities, epidemics, depletion of the ozone layer among others. Mbakwem and Mbakwem (2012) in a study on impact of climate change on higher education social studies curriculum, found that some aspects of the content require updating in response to challenges posed by climate change. The study further established some methods and materials, textbooks and reference were obsolete. To make for sustainability of social studies, the researchers recommended up-dating the quality of learning, teaching materials and methods. In addition, conferences and seminars were to be mounted to sensitize awareness on both students and lecturers on the challenges posed by climate change in social studies curriculum and way of responding to these challenges. Ozoji (2012) supports the integration of climate change education into the curricular of Nigerian universities and this to be approved by Nigerian Universities Commission and Federal Ministry of Education.

Emphasis on values education: the heightened conflict, instability and general insecurity in Nigeria calls for active integration of values in Nigeria's universities social studies curriculum content. Mezieobi, Mezieobi, Ossai and Sampson (2012) in a study found that the value education content of existing social studies curricular in Nigeria are inadequate. The Nigerian universities social studies curriculum content ought to be improved and enriched with values to mitigate against greed, corruption, leadership ineptitude, god fatherism, including other vices that have debased our moral integrity essence and democratic existence as the dignified perceived nation of Africa. Against this background, Orisa (2012:37) contributed as follows:

“What needs to be change socially (in our social studies students in Nigerian universities) is our general attitude to life. This will mean changing from our current corrupt and poverty propensities to life of purity and love. We must take complete U-turn from our present undue attachment to materialism which thrives on moral decadence, breeds false sense of value, creates a situation of tribal feud, religious intolerance, social injustice, economic sabotage to a new national re-orientation that recognizes excellence, merit, dignity and the intrinsic worth of human beings as the basis of our value system”

Strategies of actualizing transformative implementation of social studies curriculum of Nigerian Universities.

Qualitative training of social studies lecturers: Okam (2012) admonished that only professionally trained (lecturers) of social studies education can achieve instructional effectiveness in the delivery of instruction. University lecturers should be trained and retrained in the use of diverse pedagogies, integration of knowledge, information communication technology skill application to instruction, use of resource persons to facilitate some aspects of social studies curriculum contents, teaching of contemporary relevant instruction, involvement in contemporary problem-solving research with their students. Onyeniyi (2012) in a study in Kwali-Abuja found in existence low use of instructional resources in teaching social studies, Mezieobi (2003) similarly found in Abia State, teachers slim use of instructional materials and diverse pedagogies. These same lapses are applicable in the Nigerian universities, innovative instructional methods as value clarification, cooperative learning activity/interaction method, problem solving which will induce learners input are relegated. The non-use of adequate instructional materials and information communication technologies in teaching social studies, reduces the potentials of students in coming face to face to societal challenges.

Regular revision of curriculum: The dynamic nature of social studies curricula at all levels, specifically the Universities social studies curricula calls for constant revision, review and inclusion of innovation in its content and pedagogies, so as to make the instruction relevant to societal needs, aspirations and goals (Mezieobi, Mezieobi, Sampson & Ukonze, 2012). Furthermore, social studies curriculum of (of Nigerian Universities) should constantly reviewed, (enlarged) and contemporary issues should be incorporated into it to help address the problems of the moment, (Mezieobi & Onyeausi, 2012), which is a crucial aspect of a transformative curriculum in operation.

Appraisal of lecturers and students performance: To assess the operational social studies curriculum efficiency and effectiveness, the learning outcomes of students and their contributions to national development need be appraised periodically as feed back information to the operational curriculum sustainability and viability in relation to addressing national focused problems. Conversely, the lecturers have to be appraised by their students to determine their instructional competence and relevance. This approach is intended to check lapses in

the implementation of the social studies curriculum in Nigerian Universities. Baikie (2002) affirm that (social studies) education is the biggest outstanding (programme) tailored at human transformation by equipping them with values, attitudes, and skills for comprehensive national development.

Collaborative instruction: Lecturers in social studies education ought to embark on extensive research for information and data generation with students. Activity learning and teaching should dominate the instructional practice. In addition, lecturers have to extensively use resource persons to clarify difficult topics, concepts and contents that are technical in nature or require expert's clarifications.

Active support in funding social studies education research: Based on reviewed literature, the place of social studies in developing personalities for national development is not in doubt. The government at the federal, state and local government should appreciate the need for funding research in social studies education as investment to regenerating values for cooperation, ethnic harmony and strategic peace building in Nigeria. Publications, conferences and seminars that would project transformative contributions of social studies education in the development of the economy should financially be assisted by governments and the university. The above social challenges x-rayed in this discourse plaguing the peace and stability of the Nigerian nation can be understudied through social studies education field research. It is certain that efficiency entails the use of society's scarce resources in such a way as to put it to highest and best use – the use that yield most benefits to the members of the society (Nwozor, 2012:).

Constraints

The following identified constraints impede the transformative agenda of social studies curriculum implementation in responding effectively to contemporary national challenges:

- The possibility of urgent review, revision and expansion of social studies curriculum is not insight.
- Funding of research in social studies education may receive cold support as there is robust interest in funding science and technology.
- Faulty pedagogical implementation of social studies curriculum in Nigerian Universities and inadequate use of information communication technology will endure because most social studies lecturers are not ICT complaint.
- The significant number of non-professionally trained social studies education lecturers in Nigerian Universities is a threat to effective implementation of social studies curriculum.
- Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) is yet to give social studies identity and recognition it deserves to attract policy makers interest.

Conclusion

Social studies education implementation in Nigerian Universities should be made transformative to the extent that it addresses imminent national problems and aspirations of Nigeria's populace. This paper identifies in details ways of repositioning the existent social studies curriculum implementation in Nigerian Universities, in order to be viable for national development. The strategies to achieve this transformation are specifically identified, while constraints are highlighted.

Recommendations

- Entrepreneurial education, poverty alleviation, climate impact education and value education should be highly integrated and emphasized in the implementation of social studies curriculum in Nigerian Universities.
- There is the need for qualitative training of lecturers, regular revision of curriculum to accommodate contemporary issues, intensive appraisal of lecturers and students performance as a feed back generating mechanism.
- Lecturers should make adequate use of resource persons in teaching specialized specific contents of instruction.
- Government and public spirited individuals active support for funding research in social studies education advocated.
- ICT, literacy education should be integrated into social studies in Nigerian (Universities), lecturers (and students) should be trained on the use of the materials (Mezieobi & Onyeausi, 2012).
- Since poverty education is directed at skills acquisition and professional development for self existence (economic growth for national development), the (lecturers) have to make extensive use of resource persons at skills acquisition centres, business organizations, industries, craftsmen in the communities to equip learners for self development (Mezieobi & Njoku, 2012:202).

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