

Research Writing In Social Studies: the Common Sense Approach

NMOM OGUDIA CHRISTOPHER

Social Studies Department, Rivers State University of Education Port Harcourt

ABSTRACT

The integrative nature of Social Studies as an academic subject makes it possible to conclude that it has no boundary and that everything or any human activity is researchable. The paper tries to highlight some of these research areas, the predicaments of the subject and its subject matter. Research is the hallmark of academic excellence, the paper pointed out this very important feature but emphasized the need to expose our students to research work from the common sense to the applied.

INTRODUCTION

Research writing is a very crucial aspect of academic exercise in all fields of study; therefore Social Studies is not an exception.

Scholars all over the world values research writing because they know it to be a process that involves adventure (finding topics that evoke researchers passion) search and research (collection of data in interviews, text libraries and other sources) and composition (explain the research).

Thus, scholarships are developed throughout careers devoted to complex, lengthy, tension filled research-writing projects. The paper offers an encouraging focus that will illustrate for beginners in Social Studies-the research writing process.

PROBLEMS

The newness of Social Studies notwithstanding, but the lack of disciplinary ideology is the issue because it relies on the methodologies, theories, and paradigms of allied disciplines of geography, sociology, political science, economics and other humanities and science. Therefore, it becomes difficult to identify or see it as a separate school subject from those older ones since Social Studies has not yet build up its own distinct or separate body of knowledge, Nwosu (1987). This has generated too much controversy among teachers and students. Also problems like public apathy, unwelcome attitudes of other subjects' teachers and lack of textbooks amongst others still beset the acceptability (Nmom, 2001 and Ezegebe, 1985). However, inspite of all these odds, social studies still create a niche for its research writings.

The theory that research writing or writing at all facilitates learning is based on the assumption that language processes (reading, writing, listening and speaking) play an active role in the construction of knowledge.

Central to this concept of using language across the curriculum is the assumption that learning involves the ability of individuals to put ideas into their own work. Hence, Amid (1977) for example; points out that writing involves the processes of recording ideas graphically thereby providing a permanent record of thought. This written record allows opportunity for reflections and analysis. Gray (1988) and others have noted that writing also promotes thinking because it demands exactness of meaning, if it is to be understood beyond the immediate context in which it was written.

Furthermore, authorities like Atwell (1990) and others also have suggested that writing about a subject enables students to clarify information to see relationships and to make connection between what is known and new information. Experts believe that writers learn to write by writing. It also provides additional opportunities for less capable writers to engage in writing activities may assist them in developing their writing abilities. Research writing also helps students to develop writing fluency but also facilitate the retention of conduct they have learned and could save time spent on re-teaching.

SOME IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH WRITING

Social Studies research writing therefore dwells very much on unconventional forms of research-not stereotypical, exhibiting the followings according to Delpit (1988).

1. It generates data so that other realities can enter our consciousness thus allowing us to examine our beliefs.
2. It raises voices or questions, opinions, ideas, excitement and tension.
3. It exposes students to a social concern that should imitate true, not silenced, dialogue and something that is important to students.

Making students involved in research writing, they derive much more than writing experiences with Social Studies lesson because they learn more than communication skills. They learn how research writing

adventure invites new perspectives, critical and imagination that concern all abilities. Thus, Green (1988) says when students lack these abilities, a few thwart these opportunities and many cannot act on their freedom (academic). Instead, they are too numb to launch inquiries or too passive to discover or to learn because even reading seems irrelevant especially these days of poor reading culture.

IDENTIFYING SOCIAL CONCERNS RESEARCHABLES

Students who study social concern which is what Social Studies is all about, boost their commitment to civic action and this deepens their sense of evil involvement. When students integrate meaningful, that is involving a personal wish to understand writing experiences with Social Studies topics; they become much more exposed and skilled.

Contrarily, no formulars exist to help students identify social concerns. Rather than impose one topic (which some teachers do, due to their limited background and understanding) students must search a variety of sources, their lives familiar social contexts, easily accessible public records, newspapers, new magazines, periodicals, newsletters, religious pamphlets and tracts even television programmes, radio discussion, seminars and conference papers. Unfortunately, these areas of sourcing researchable topics amongst our current students look mean and unimportant for issues that evoke their concern which obviously are in abundance. This form of research undoubtedly across disciplines cumbs many view points. These sources are cheap and easily accessibly to student's research beginners, but they are unnoticed and disregarded.

Thus, from the above, therefore, the student's initial task is to identify social concerns about which they care and select one of them to research and write about. Hence Green(1988) asserts that an integral relationship exists between reaching out to learn (which is the basic problem) and the search.

Without being on to something, young people feel little pressure, little challenge. There are no mountains they particularly want to climb, so there are few obstacles with which they feel they need to engage “.

With the scenario painted above, it is obvious that without challenging the intellect of these young ones, nothing tend to bother them. They may take no heed of droppings of water bag sachets all over their campus, even the number of homelessness, those who squats and sleep in the classroom and unapproved uninhabitable campus cubicles, the campus wanderers, the unserious students, the other garbage's the unused burned-out buildings, the frequent able bodies beggars that disrupt classes, the uncertified roving pastors or evangelists that usually disrupt classes, converting our classes to a church or crusade sessions. Outside the campus environment, the mentally ill-wandering with all manner of beating instruments but well organized.

The skimpy and punk fashion that is in vogue among teenagers in the campus and outside that transmit wrong signals. The numerous/child hawkers and many more social concerns. It may be that no one communicates the importance of thinking about them or suggest the need to play with hypothetical alternatives. There may be no sense of identification and ability to take it seriously, to take it personally. There may seem to be no problems, no breaking of now grounds, no tensions, no desires to reach beyond. These are the fundamental problems of early teachers.

In the University of Education Port Harcourt Department of Social Studies, courses like “case study”, Group Field work” and “Workshop” provide good opportunities for the challenges in social studies education whereby students are required to take their learning outside the classroom individually or collectively and at the end present report under the supervision of a lecturer.

Social concerns and topical issues earlier mentioned in this write-up are very good researchable area for any student to write on. Through this process, teachers offer ideas to move students into their own interpretation of their live and their live world, opening wider and wider perspective as they do so. In this case they brain storm, interview people, and scan references, historical, to the contemporary for ideas, to spark through and questions, to disclose and unveil, to free feelings and expression and to arouse passion.

Once student identify these social concerns, they study surrounding issues theoretical and practical, and social interactions within the topic complex relationship web. When students study topics of the interest cooperatively, they can begin to view issues critically and plan social action. This approach stands in contrast to approaches that cast students' in a passive roles, bearing in mind that traditional teaching as narrative in character with the teacher narrating and students memorizing the narrated content.

Therefore, instead of teachers depositing knowledge, they should provide opportunities for consciousscientisation in which student become aware of the influences of their environment and their ability to change their society. Through the process of such project research writing and critical dialogue, students learn about their surroundings and their ability to change their lives.

Corporative group activities, projects and research work, are effective research approach with second language learners like Nigerians because they create more opportunities for bilingual students to ask for restatement with substandard English, Street English, local languages for clarifications. This is evidently devoid of stereotype learning through textbooks or lecturers that are over laddened with supposedly Queen's English Language.

In this case, student must try to narrow their topic to make the processes of taking notes and collecting facts and data manageable. With this, students can begin their researches with their own experience; hence Siegel (1980), Pulkrose also (1979) say personal experiences enhances learning and students also will interview others who know their chosen topics for relevant reliable information's. Reliable social studies research includes understanding the feelings and experience of people living topics. Greene (1986) exposes the irony in our population of having vast amount of Information at a time when we are deliberately entertained, amused and soothed into, avoidance, denial, and neglect. In view of this, social studies requires interpretation, analysis and manipulation of information to solve problems that cannot be solved routines application of previously acquire knowledge Newman (1990). This idea was also shared by Brophy (1990) when he said that one important goal of social studies instruction is to help students become effective decision makers decision-making is a clear example of higher order thought, an attribute of research because when we ask students to make decisions using a body of knowledge we are asking to interpret, analyze and manipulate that information in aon-routine way. This view is supported by Nmom (2007).

Decision making also requires higher order thought because it taps into student's causing understanding. When confronted with a problem from the social studies domain e.g. (debt burden and poverty) and asked to propose a solution, students often think about its causes as well as the consequences of several possible causes of actins, says Nmom (2006).

CONCLUSION

Research in academic is a very important element in present day educational process and the enhancement of human ideas. Social studies, therefore, is not devoid of the emerging process of human endeavours.

Research in schools should not always be high sounding and technical, commonsense research approach should be inculcated so that rudiments of research procedures could easily be acquired by students early enough.

REFERENCES

- Amid, Jenet (1977) "Writing a Model of Learning" College Composition and Communication No. 28.
- Ashton-Warmer, Sylvia (1963) Teacher New York" Simon and Schuster. Atwell, Nancy, (1990) Coming to Know: Writing to Learn in Intermediate Grades Portsmouth NH Heinemann.
- Deptit, Lisa (1988) "The Silence Dialogue" Power and pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children Haward Educational Review 58 No. 3.
- Ezegbe, M.O. (1985) Introduction to Social Studies Imo Newspaper Company Limited Owerri. Gray, Jonald J. (1988) "Writing Across the College Curriculum" Phi Delta Cappa 69 No 101
- Greene Maxine (1986) " in Search of Critical" Pedagogy Haward Educational Review 56. NO. 4
- Greene, Maxine (1988) Education, Art and Mastery: Toward the Sphere of Freedom in The Dialectic of Freedom New York Teacher College Press.
- Nmom, O.C. (2001) "The Role of Social Studies in Understanding Human History and Survival" Journal of Pedagogy and Development Special Edition.
- Nmom, O.C. (2006) "An Analysis of the Nature and Scope of Social Studies" The Architect:Interdisciplinary Journal of Research Initiator. Vol.1 No.3&4, pp109-1 19.
- Nmom, O.C. (2007) "The Features of Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis" Seminar Paper Department of Sociology/Anthropology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Nwosu, S. N. (1987) "The Concept and Scope of Social Studies" A Workshop Paper at Port Harcourt Organized by Longman Plc.
- Paker, Robert 0, and Vera Goodkin (1987) The Consequences of Writing Enhancing Learning in the Disciplines; Upper Montchair NJ.Boyutor/Cook.
- Pluckrose, Henry (1979) Children in their Primary Schools New York Penguin Books.
- Siegal Gail, (1980) Sequences of Instruction-In Sequence in Writing No. 13 University of California Berkeley Writing Project.