

Teachers' Attitudes: A Great Influence on Teaching and Learning of Social Studies

Shittu Rashidat Omolara

Department of educational management, University of Ilorin, PMB 1515, Ilorin, Ilorin. Nigeria

Oanite Rukayat Adebukola

Sociology Department, University of Ilorin, PMB 1515, Ilorin, Ilorin. Nigeria

Abstract

It is highly important for the youth to be civic conscious to be able to shoulder leadership responsibilities effectively. This could be achieved if the needed knowledge is imparted by highly motivated teachers who will in turn inspire the learners. To be certain about the motivation level of the subject teachers, this study was conducted to examine and evaluate teachers' attitudes towards teaching and learning of social studies in secondary schools. Descriptive research approach was used with simple sampling method. The population of the study consisted of 100 randomly selected junior secondary school teachers and students. Questionnaires were administered to collect data and simple percentage was used in analyzing it. It is evident that teachers had negative attitudes towards teaching social studies in secondary schools. Therefore, stakeholders in education should see to motivating the subject teachers to teach the subject effectively and efficiently to arouse civic consciousness in the youth who will be our future leaders.

Keywords: Teachers' attitudes, students, teaching and learning social studies, secondary schools

INTRODUCTION

An attitude is a mindset that affects how a person thinks and acts. Attitude can influence a person's performance positively or negatively. For instance, negative attitude towards one's job will result in negative performance. Similarly, attitude could also affect how well a teacher plans and prepares for his/her lessons. The attitude of a teacher, consciously or unconsciously, greatly affects students' academic performance. It has been established that teachers' attitudes highly influence students' interest in learning. Moreover, personality traits of the teachers are more powerful and influential than the course content or instructional strategies used in the classroom. A good classroom strategy requires full interest and support from teachers and learners. If a teacher appears not interested or careful about a particular subject or student, he/she will be unable to foster a supportive learning environment. In addition to that, teachers with negative attitudes may not be as approachable to students as teachers who are positively motivated. So, students find it difficult asking such a teacher questions on the grey areas of the subject he/she teaches. This implies that teachers' attitude towards their students and teaching in general is very important for students' success. In the same vein, teachers need to be highly interested in the subjects and topics they teach. For instance, a Christian teacher who teaches Islamic Studies can never be interested in the subject because the subject is only being taught to earn his/her livelihood. This will in turn take a toll on the students that are to be taught.

Social studies, as one of the core subjects in junior secondary schools, is facing attitudinal challenge in the society which take toll on teaching and learning effectiveness of the subject. The challenge is not only from the subject teachers and the students, but also from the parents of the students concerned. To proffer solutions to this problem, this study was conducted to investigate teachers' attitudes towards teaching social studies in secondary schools.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were formulated to discuss the issues.

1. What are the attitudes of social studies teachers towards teaching the subject in secondary schools?
2. What are the factors are responsible for their attitudes?
3. Do rewards and incentives affect attitudes of the social studies teachers towards teaching?

Research Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no relationship between availability of teaching materials and social studies teachers' attitudes towards teaching in secondary schools.

Ho₂: There is no relationship between staff motivation and their attitudes towards teaching.

Ho₃: There is no relationship between job satisfaction and attitude of social studies teachers towards teaching.

Ho₄: There is no relationship between availability qualified teachers and attitudes of teachers towards teaching.

Ho₅: There is no relationship between government attitudes towards education and the attitudes of social

studies teachers towards teaching.

Ho₆: There is no relationship between societal disposition towards social studies teachers and their attitudes towards teaching?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Attitude and Its Formation

Attitudinal formation is determined by a number of motivational bases . According to David (2013) citing Rusell (1971) There are four motivational bases for attitude formation. These include utilitarian, value-expressive, ego-defensive, and knowledge. Attitude formed on utilitarian base is associated with survival, safety and other social needs of individuals. This means that one's attitude towards teaching and learning of a subject is bound to be favorable if it improves one's survival needs.

Value expressive attitude is based on a person's motive for self-esteem and self-actualization. People seek to develop an identity and on the concept of self-esteem in which they have pride. This implies that attitude that coincides with a person's values and ego-ideals will enhance one's feeling of self-esteem. Majority of the social studies teachers are exhibiting negatives attitude to teaching social studies because of the low self-esteem attached to the subject. Ego-defensive attitude is a mechanism formed by a person to defend one's anxieties. The implication is that teachers who become dissatisfied with their teaching conditions and environment are likely to express negative attitude towards teaching and learning of their students. The last one is knowledge. This is needed to cope with the attitudes of those around a person or by adopting an attitude which is consistent with one's thinking towards the subject matter under study. In this case, teaching and learning of social studies concepts can be effectively carried out in a welcoming environment that is free of tensions, threats and molestations.

Social studies and teachers' attitudes

Social studies is the learning of man's interaction with his environment. It entails how man influences and in turn is influenced by his physical, social, political, economic, psychological and cultural environment (Adewoye, 2004). In order to achieve these useful and beneficial goals of social studies, efforts should be intensified on how the teaching and learning of the subject will take place effectively and efficiently in our secondary schools. Based on this, the disposition of teachers and their attitude towards the subject must be examined because they play pivotal role in teaching and learning processes. Students could have better assimilation if teachers show charming interests in their subjects and focus their teaching because attitudes of teachers and students influence instructional practice (Wilkin, 2004).

Attitudes of teachers towards teaching Social studies in secondary schools

Teachers' competence- Social studies is a very challenging subject which requires only well trained and intellectual teachers for its handling. Most of the available teachers are not competent enough to teach the subject .This makes it difficult for such teachers to give detail explanations about the required concepts. Also, poor mastery of the subject by the teacher causes students' loss of interest in learning the subject. An intelligent and sound teacher with good mastery of his subject matter always commands respect and gains students' attention during teaching learning process (Aggarwal,2001). According to Agnes (2013) teachers with good professional competent and interpersonal skills are more effective in their classrooms in terms of students' behavior, better understanding of concept by students and disposition of positive and mental alertness by learners.

Existence obscurity in the subject concepts- Although, some of the subject teachers are not competent enough, but those that are good also teaches abstract facts without any reference to context that might give meanings and clarity to the concepts. Furthermore, they hide important information and beneficial discussions with the belief that the purpose of teaching is to transmit fixed knowledge to students (Passos, 2009). Therefore, teachers' negative disposition or attitude towards teaching profession, even if they are knowledgeable with sound professional training, may affect students' performance negatively (Sprinthal, 2007).

Transfer of aggression- this is resulting from poor dispositions of the society, government, parents and the students towards social studies teachers and the subject itself. Teaching and learning can only be effective when the correspondent teachers are happy and professionally fulfilled (Sprinthal, 2007).and teachers with good attitudes create a good learning environment for students (Vermunt and Verschaffel, 2000).

Lack of training in process skills-Majority of the teachers don't see themselves as professionals who need special skills in problem solving techniques, critical and intellectual reasoning and decision making skills. Since impaction of knowledge is solely meant for who have skills, attitudes and values to impact on others, lack of these important skills by some social studies teachers prevent them from giving or teaching the students the right things required of them to teach.

Avoidance of controversial issues- Some teachers try to avoid controversial issues that might be of great benefits to the students in the classroom. This could result from lack of sound knowledge of the concepts or fear of criticism from the society or school heads when sensitive issues related to the culture of the school location, tribalism and how bad leaders maltreat their follower are discussed. Such attitudes displayed by the social study

teachers prevent students from knowing how interesting the subject is and benefits they could derive if they fully direct their attention towards social studies lessons.

Limited and shallow textbook contents- Lack of teaching materials like textbooks and workbooks for both teachers and students is also affecting teachers' attitudes towards teaching of the subject in secondary schools. The teachers do not have access to appropriate textbooks and the available ones are not even relevant to new curriculum. Also, most social studies textbooks have been written by people with superficial knowledge of the subject, and hence sub-standard, a situation which seriously undermines the effective teaching and learning of social studies concepts (David, 2013).

Factors affecting teachers' attitude towards teaching and learning social studies

There are many factors responsible for display of negatives and unfriendly attitudes by the teachers towards their teaching subjects. These factors include:

Students' attitude towards Social Studies- Social studies is quite different from what it was before. Nowadays, students pay little or no attention during Social Studies lesson. They found the subject very boring, not interesting and an avenue for them to sleep and relax as a result of the method used by the teachers. Students see social studies as boring and far from anything they could relate to their life (Lawson, 2003). These negative attitudes of students were not because of the subject is really boring, but because of their perceptions and general views on the subject. Students don't like Social studies because they are not well oriented on the career opportunity for those who specialize in the subject like those of Mathematics, English language and all other science related and commercial subjects. Educationists know that readiness of the learners motivates and gingers ability and interest of the teachers to impart knowledge to the students. Their lack of interest discourages teachers to teach them with all seriousness required. For instance, Leah and Wally (2001) quoted a student saying "*Social Studies has nothing to do with being an auto-mechanic and that's what I'm going to do when I leave school...take over the family business...so why do I need to know about it*". This is the kind of attitude and disposition towards the subject under discussion.

Poor Government attitudes - The attitude of government towards Social Studies is nothing to write home about. Consequently, the subject lacks appropriate teaching and instructional materials such as textbooks for both teachers and learners. Unlike Mathematics, English and Physics, Chemistry, Biology, government pays little attention to provision of required and necessary materials needed for effective teaching of the subject. All these make teaching uninteresting for the teachers which in turn results in lack of interest to teach students the required knowledge (Barros and Elia, 2008).

Lack of job satisfaction and motivation- This is one of the major factors causing poor teachers' attitudes towards teaching social studies in secondary schools. Social Studies teachers are always underrated by not only the government, but also by their colleagues and school heads. In-service and out-service training such as seminars, workshop, conferences and excursions organized by the government and school heads for other subject teachers are not arranged for the social studies teachers. They don't have opportunities and exposure to update their knowledge like other teachers do. This renders Social Studies teachers less effective. Also, their efforts are not rewarded like those of other subject teachers where efforts are being rewarded with gifts and items from parents or incentives and extra payment from the schools. This is supported by Vermunt and Verschaffel (2000) who opined that work place also plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' attitudes towards teaching especially school principals' behaviours and tone of communication with in the school premises.

Poor parental support- One may be thinking of the impact of this to teachers' attitudes, but it does have tremendous unimagined effects. Parents are not ready to go extra mile in buying required materials needed for Social Studies. This is because of societal disposition towards the subject as one with little or no career opportunity than teaching it in schools. This misconception about the subject does not encourage the parents and guardians to have any interests in the subject. They care not if their children fail the subject but arrange extra lesson hours for them in other subjects they think are more important to them than social studies. This really affects the teachers when the society, the parents and students don't know the benefits of their subject. This kills the teachers' morals, interests and prevents them from showing enthusiasm towards teaching of the subject in secondary schools. Parental support and full participation in their children education had positive influence on students attitudes to learning, interests and general performance (Desarollo,2007).

Poor remuneration and delayed salary- Teachers' salaries are very poor and the little amount they receive is not even paid on time. Teachers really suffer so much before being given their salaries. So, when they are not well fed and have enough money to cater for them and their immediate families, their disposition towards teaching will be negatively affected (Osunde and Izevbogie, 2006).

Materials and Methods

The research was of a descriptive survey type which aimed at examining the factors affecting Social Studies teachers' attitudes towards teaching of social studies in junior secondary schools and their attitudes to teaching the subject as well.

The sample consisted of 100 qualified junior secondary school Social Studies teachers. This was made up of 41 male and 59 female teachers from five government owned secondary schools and 100 junior secondary school students from the selected schools.

Two types of questionnaires were used to collect the data used for analysis. The first type was on attitudes of teachers towards teaching Social Studies (student's questionnaire). This was designed to seek students' views about the attitudes of their teachers because the true picture of their attitudes cannot be revealed by the teacher themselves. The second type was on factors affecting Social Studies teachers' attitudes towards teaching (teachers' questionnaire). As the name implies this was structured to seek the perception and views of the social studies teachers about the likely causes of their poor dispositions towards teaching of Social Studies in secondary schools. Four likert type scale of strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), strongly disagreed (SD) and disagreed (D) were used to rate the reactions of the respondents to the items contained in the questionnaires. All the data collected were analyzed with the use of simple percentage.

Results

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND ANALYSES

The following questionnaire items were developed to answer research question 1.

What are the attitudes of social studies teacher towards teaching of social studies in secondary schools?

ATTITUDES OF TEACHERS TOWARDS TEACHING SOCIAL STUDY STUDENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

| SN | Items of Social Studies teachers attitudes | SA | A | A% | SD | D | D% |
|-----|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1. | Social studies teachers are always ready to teach us their subject. | 20 | 10 | 30 | 49 | 21 | 70 |
| 2. | Teachers come to the class regularly and punctually. | 6 | 17 | 23 | 55 | 22 | 77 |
| 3. | Social studies teachers abuse us on slight issues. | 53 | 27 | 80 | 13 | 7 | 20 |
| 4. | They show deep interest in teaching their subjects. | 6 | 21 | 27 | 46 | 27 | 73 |
| 5. | There are no adequate materials for social studies like other subjects. | 61 | 11 | 72 | 20 | 8 | 28 |
| 6. | Social studies teachers teach us how to solve problem and make sound decisions. | 12 | 19 | 31 | 65 | 4 | 69 |
| 7. | Social study teachers teach us complex topic that involve reasoning. | 14 | 20 | 34 | 55 | 11 | 66 |
| 8. | Social study teachers strive towards making learning easier for us. | 8 | 26 | 34 | 50 | 16 | 66 |
| 9. | Majority of our social studies teachers don't know how to teach the subject. | 61 | 23 | 84 | 10 | 6 | 16 |
| 10. | Social studies teachers teach us with the methods we like. | 16 | 18 | 34 | 56 | 10 | 66 |

Research question 2

The following questionnaire items were structured to answer the second research question which says:

What are the factors responsible for negative attitudes of the social study teachers towards teaching social studies I secondary schools?

Factors affecting Social studies teachers' attitude Teachers Questionnaire

| SN | ITEMS | SA | A | %A | SD | D | %D |
|-----|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1. | Students' attitude towards the subject is not encouraging. | 51 | 22 | 73 | 10 | 17 | 27 |
| 2. | There are limited periods allocated for Social studies. | 42 | 39 | 81 | 12 | 7 | 19 |
| 3. | We always experience delayed salary and this discourage going to class. | 61 | 24 | 85 | 7 | 8 | 15 |
| 4. | Parents do not recognize our efforts as that of other teachers. | 32 | 41 | 73 | 18 | 9 | 27 |
| 5. | We attend conference, seminars and workshop to update our knowledge. | 11 | 20 | 31 | 40 | 29 | 69 |
| 6. | There are not enough teaching materials in the school to aid learning. | 41 | 43 | 84 | 6 | 10 | 16 |
| 7. | The teaching and learning of Social studies is adequately supervised. | 18 | 9 | 27 | 40 | 33 | 73 |
| 8. | Poor attitude of government to the subject affects our attitude to teaching. | 60 | 20 | 80 | 16 | 4 | 20 |
| 9. | We are recognized by school heads and colleagues at school. | 20 | 23 | 43 | 44 | 13 | 57 |
| 10. | There is lack of motivation from the school administrators. | 50 | 18 | 68 | 17 | 15 | 32 |
| 11. | Incentives and extra allowances are giving to us. | 18 | 11 | 29 | 49 | 22 | 71 |
| 12. | The societal disposition and interest towards social study is very good | 15 | 21 | 36 | 21 | 43 | 64 |
| 13. | There are limited numbers of Social study teachers in the school. | 47 | 22 | 69 | 16 | 15 | 31 |
| 14. | Social study teachers are overloaded with work and this affect teaching effectiveness. | 52 | 28 | 80 | 16 | 4 | 20 |

DISCUSSION

Teachers' attitudes towards teaching social studies

It was evident from our results that Social Studies teachers are not always ready to teach their students. This revealed that the teachers were reluctant to teach their subject as expected of them. Krecie and Grmek (2005) explained this observation by quoting a second-year pedagogy student who said it was important for an individual to choose the right profession especially if they would choose teaching. He further said that many did know how demanding teaching profession is and so it could not be well carried out without real wish and interest. In the same vein, it was realized that majority of Social Studies teachers were not punctual and regular in their

classes. This means Social studies teachers only go to classes when they like. Their lack of interest and enthusiasm in the subject has greatly resulted into bad attitude towards teaching and thus affected students' performance. This is because teaching- learning environment played a key role in shaping students' attitudes about Social Studies or any other subject. Furthermore, teachers who are always ready and willing to assist students in learning, showed enthusiasm in the classroom, and paid close attention to student needs had a strong effect on how students felt about social studies (Alazzi and Chiodo, 2004).

Also, our results showed that majority of Social Studies teachers abuse students unnecessarily on slight issues. This act of Social Studies teachers is nothing but transfer of aggression as a result of disposition of the people around them towards them and their subject. It could also be the result of frustration they encounter from students' obstinacy in the class which has led to exhaust their patience

On showing interest on the part of the teachers, it was found that Social Studies teachers did not show deep interest in teaching social studies. This could be because they themselves do not enjoy being a teacher of their subject and they do not enjoy associating themselves with it. Therefore, they teach students out of necessity and not out of passion and all that they do are reluctantly carried out. The teachers turn to be ego-defensive in their attitude to defend their dignity. This is because they feel being looked down upon and consequently get dissatisfied with their job. These types of teachers are likely to express negative attitude towards teaching and learning of their students (David, 2013).

For teaching materials, our results revealed that teaching materials for the subject are not available in the schools. This could have resulted from the recognition the stake holders in the school give the subject which has led to inadequacy or lack of teaching materials. The implication is that students will end up learning in abstraction and rote learning will replace understanding which is highly important for sound mind development. Also, the methodologies of teaching will remain obsolete since modern teaching aids are not available for use.

According to the result of this study, teachers of Social Studies did not impart in the students problem solving and decision making skills. This might have resulted from the fact that they themselves do not have the required qualities since what one does not have one cannot give.

It was also revealed from this study that Social Studies teachers only teach their students topics they like and avoid controversial and profound issues in the subject. This is the result of poor mastery of the subject by majority of the teachers because most of them are not trained and qualified teachers of the subject.

Majority of teachers of this subject do not go extra mile to make learning easier for their students. They could not explain the subject concepts clearly to the students by giving accurate illustrations and examples to make them understand better. This could be because majority of the teachers don't really know how to teach to give better understanding to their students and those that can teach effectively are debarred by their ego. So, students become frustrated and learning fails to take place.

Moreover, teachers of Social Studies were not ready to apply varieties of teaching methods in their teaching. They only stick to discussion method which makes the whole class boring and not interesting. The nature of the subject, as a very challenging one, calls for diversified and suitable methods of teaching as at when due in order to stimulate learners' interests. All the points raised here constitute into barriers that block students from learning and understanding the subject as it should be.

Factors affecting social studies teachers' attitudes

Students' attitudes towards learning Social Studies were not encouraging. It is very obvious that only bad teachers will not help serious students who are ready to learn. Nonchalant attitudes of the learners towards learning of social studies in secondary school could result into poor teacher's attitudes towards teaching as well. Students enjoy classes when teachers are enthusiastic and excited about their subjects. Moreover, enthusiasm and excitement motivate students to have a strong desire to learn a subject (Alazzi, 2013). This is because teaching is an intensive psychological process which requires teachers to have ability to maintain productive learning environments, motivate students, make sound decisions and create personal relationships with their students so as to make positive impacts on the lives of their students (Watson,2003).

Our study revealed that there are few number of periods allocated for teaching social studies. Frequency of lessons makes learning more meaningful to students than the situation of a subject done just once in a week. If the subject is frequently learnt, it becomes endeared to student and consequently leaning will take place with ease.

In the same vein, our study revealed that secondary school teachers generally experienced salary delay every month. This is general and social studies is not an exemption. Delayed payment of wages and salaries of workers definitely affects their performances and reduces their productivities. High salaries and its payment at appropriate time attract pool of high quality teachers, influence individuals' decisions to stay in teaching and develop positive attitudes towards it (Figlio, 2002).

In addition, it is evident here that parents did not show interest in Social Studies and never ready to appreciate the efforts of its teachers. This have stemmed from their ignorance about the prospects of the subject

and the mental and social training the subject can offer the students. Therefore, students become infected with the sickness in the understanding of their parents.

Another thing revealed by this study is that the subject teachers were not given opportunities to update their knowledge the way other subject teachers did. For instance, they will not be among those attending conferences, seminars and workshops because of the general perception of the subjects as not being so important. Denial of Social Studies teachers these opportunities will definitely result in bad instructional delivery.

Another important revelation of this study was that teachers of the subject were not furnished with appropriate teaching and learning materials for teaching social studies in secondary schools. A well prepared and appropriately taught classroom lessons may not achieve its objectives provided there is absence of appropriate teaching and learning materials to aid the learning process. This, therefore, discourages teachers and renders the students unserious about learning the subject.

Similarly, we find out that teaching learning process was no longer supervised in the secondary schools. It is a known fact that anything left unsupervised will fail. Supervision is a program for enhancing classroom work through direct visitation and observation. It provides teachers with opportunities to develop their capabilities towards students' better performance (Sergiovanni and Starrat, 2002). If this aspect is given due consideration, it changes the attitudes of the teachers as well as enhances students mindset in teaching and learning environments

Poor attitudes of government towards teaching and learning of Social Studies in secondary schools is among the causes of negative attitudes displayed in classroom teaching by the teachers. As revealed by our results, Social Studies teachers in secondary school were underrated by school heads and colleagues and the government cares less about them. Not valuing the area of specialization of a teacher can kill the morale, zeal and confidence of such a teacher. The implication is that as long as these shortcomings are not properly addressed and checked, the students will also at the receiving end of the teachers' attitudes.

Another source of problem of Social Studies teachers is that they are not motivated by school heads and administrators as they do for others. Motivation is necessary in any worthy activities most especially teaching. Motivations inform of praises, encouragement and encomium could enhance both teachers and students and will lead to a change of attitude. On the other hand, if the teachers are left uncared for, their negative attitude could go from bad to worse and chaos may result in the environment because they are the custodians of teaching civic rights. Furthermore, incentives and extra allowances should be given to the subject teachers. Our result showed that both motivation and allowances were not in place for the teachers to benefit from. Teacher compensation is still often viewed as a policy strategy that could be used to improve student achievement, stimulate teachers' interests and make teaching very effective(Zebra,*et al.*,2006).

Social Studies teachers are obviously discriminated against and almost left behind in every beneficial program in the school. The disposition of the society at large towards social studies is very bad. This was observed from the reactions of the respondents to the issue of the subject teacher being discriminated against. The attitudes of the people surrounding a school where a particular subject is taught could have great impact on the successful implementation of curriculum.

Our result also showed that there was limited number of qualified Social Studies teacher in secondary schools. This shows that there were not enough competent teachers that could handle the subject and make learning very easy for the learners. The implication here is that the subject will be made difficult for the students to learn because the subject is handled by amateurs who have ideas but not the real and required knowledge.

Finally, most of competent Social Studies teachers were overloaded with a lot of assignments and they hardly have time to plan their lessons adequately. This could have resulted from the fact that they multidisciplinary orientation because the subject is an integration of many disciplines. On the other hand, such treatment could have been warranted because it is thought that if they are not saddled with such task what benefit will give in return for their salaries. Anyhow, just treatment should be given to those teachers to get the best out of them and have students well molded in return.

CONCLUSION

From the research reveals that Social Studies teachers have bad attitudes towards teaching the subject. The attitudes are irregularities in attending class, poor mastery of the subject, monotony in the method of instructional delivery, and lack of enthusiasm. In the same vein, the reasons which pre-disposes them poor attitudes towards teaching are poor support from the students' parents, lack of motivation and job satisfaction, poor attitudes of students towards learning, poor social status, inadequate government support,, lack of relevant and up to date teaching and learning materials, low level of instructional supervision and delay in the payment of their salaries.

RECOMMENDATION

The researcher suggests the following recommendations in order to change the attitudes of teachers, learners, and

the societies at large towards teaching and learning of social studies in secondary schools.

Government at all level in local, State and federal should try to recognize the great benefit to be derived when social studies is well taught in secondary school system. Therefore, there is need for adequate provision of both human and material resources needed for the successful implementation of the subject in schools.

School heads should treat all teachers equally. It requires the same training to be a professional teacher in a particular field. Social studies teachers should be rated high and more valued in the school system.

The social studies teachers should try to pursue all beneficial knowledge that can improve their skills and teaching competencies as a teacher.

School heads and board members should organize a parent-teacher association meeting and allow each teacher to discuss the value and important attached to his /her own subject.

Field trip and other interesting method of teaching should be exposed to learners in order to stimulate their interest in the learning of social studies.

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