

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the implementation of Social Studies Curriculum in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B Educational Zone of Benue State. The study was guided by three specific objectives. The study raised and answered three research questions. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in Zone B Educational Zone of Benue State. The population of the study is 283 teachers. The sample size for the study is 274. Self-constructed questionnaire and checklist were used as instruments for data collection. The items of the questionnaire were trial tested to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire using the Cronbach Alpha method and it yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.79. The direct delivery and retrieval method were employed in the administration of the instrument. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of Frequency Counts and Percentages to answer the research questions raised for the study. The study found that Social Studies teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State are qualified for the implementation of Social Studies curriculum based on set minimum standard of NCE. The study also found among others that the teaching methods used by teachers in most Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State are; inquiry, dramatization, questions and answer, discussion and home assignment and these teaching methods adopted are in accordance with the curriculum implementation blueprint. The study concluded that even though the Social Studies teachers are qualified, the curriculum in most Junior Secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State is not well implemented as; teacher/students' ratio is not in accordance with the prescription. The study recommended among others that government should employ more qualified Social Studies teachers so as to ensure that teachers/students' ratio should be in accordance with the prescription of Social Studies curriculum implementation with regards to minimum standard of 1 teacher to 40 students in a class.

Keywords: *Social Studies, Curriculum, Implementation*

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the greatest powers man has developed for his continued progress. Education is the only potent instrument for social re-construction where a social order characterized by such values as integrity, morality, creativity, industry and self-reliance are envisaged (Samuel, 2015). Education has been recognized as

the root for all developments as it serves as a means to open door for national development and environmental sustainability. The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2013) describes education as an instrument for effective national development. According to Odey (2014), education was linked to a prototype or the laying of foundation of a building on a solid rock; meaning that education is the foundation on which our future is laid. In the same light, Adesina (2011) asserts that education is a necessary force in the economic, intellectual, social and cultural empowerment. The author further asserted that education has the capacity to bring about behavioural and character changes, as well as restructure capabilities for desired development especially through the various subjects being taught in secondary school.

Education at the secondary school level comes between the primary school and the tertiary institution. Secondary education is responsible for the development of the young during their adolescence, the most rapid phase of their physical, mental and emotional growth. It is at this very education level, particularly in its first cycle, where values and attitudes formed at primary are more firmly ingrained alongside the acquisition of knowledge and skills (Samuel, 2015). The desire to achieve the aforementioned goals prompted the introduction of more subjects into the secondary schools among which is Social Studies Education.

Social Studies is an investigation into human activity in all conditions, places and times. In other words, Social Studies is all about a comprehensive study of man's history, location, culture, values and attitudes, as well as his daily transactions, interactions and contracts in his society (Dubey, Onyabe & Prokepek as cited in Okojie, 2017). Social Studies has social, political, economic and technological relevance to national development. This is because Social studies content is organized around social and environmental issues affecting man's existence, and the capability to manage, and preserve the environment for sustainable development (Mezieobi, Akpochofo & Mezieobi, 2010). Social Studies was introduced into the official school curriculum in Nigeria on 9th September 1960 following its success in solving societal problems in Britain and America. This programme of study was first introduced in Britain after the 1st and 2nd world wars in order to appease the conscience of the citizens to respect constituted authority, submissive to their parents, show regards to the elders of the society, help to protect public property, value the lives of fellow citizens and contribute positively towards the development of the society (Edinyang, Mezieobi & Ubi, 2013). Social studies came to limelight during the 1969 National Curriculum Conference held in Lagos where a paradigm shift from colonial orientation was made. Fafunwa (2004) observed that it was the first national attempt to change the colonial orientation of the Nigerian educational system and promote national consciousness and self-reliance through the educational process as this brought about the introduction of Social studies into the secondary school curriculum.

The major objective of Social Studies as contained in the school curriculum is; creating a free society of responsible and responsive citizens by imparting them with desirable attitudes and values as well as appropriate mental and physical skills and abilities for meaningful living and interaction (National Policy on Education in Baba, 2015). Social Studies is thought of as an integration of relevant learning experiences derived from the various aspects of human thought for the purpose of finding concerted solutions to societal problems. Thus, for the philosophy to be in harmony with Nigeria's national objectives, Social Studies education should be geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, national consciousness and national unity as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress. These are the main targets of Social Studies Education. Ogundare as cited in Baba (2015), says Social Studies programme should aim at achieving the diverse and ever changing physical and social environment as a whole including its natural resources, together with the rational use and conservation of these resources for development; developing in the learners, the capacity to learn and acquire skills including not only the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing but also of developing the skills of hand together with those of analysis and inference which are important in the formation of sound judgment; developing in children, positive and desirable values of citizenship and the desires in them to make positive contribution to the creation of a united Nigeria; and inculcating in the learners sympathetic views which will enable them to appreciate the diversity and interdependence of all members of the local community and of the wider national and international community.

Attainment of the aforementioned can be achieved through the effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum. Curriculum implementation is aimed at actualizing the planned curriculum. It is the translation of the curriculum contents into practice or action. In the words of Nzewi, Okpara and Akudolu as cited in Laraba (2015), implementation of curriculum is normally done in the classroom through joint efforts of the teacher and learners. In curriculum implementation, the teacher is expected to adopt appropriate teaching methods and instructional materials to guide the students' learning. Students are expected to be actively involved in the process of interacting with the learning materials and activities. In this view,

assessment of the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum is expected to help to reposition Social Studies teaching and learning process and make it more relevant to the needs of the learners and the society at large. The availability of quality Social Studies teachers and the corresponding utilization of materials, and instructional facilities are desirable strategies in the process of implementation for achieving the goals of Social Studies curriculum.

The guidelines for the implementation of Social Studies curriculum in secondary schools as contained in National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) was established under some content areas among which are; teaching method, teacher-pupil ratio, infrastructure, teachers' qualification, instructional materials, monitoring/supervision, guidance counseling, library, strategic planning, students/students transition, curriculum, certification, quality assurance, assessment of learning achievement, community empowerment, publications, statistics/education management information system, procurement of goods and procurement of works among a host of others. However, of interest to the researcher among the content areas of quality implementation of Social Studies curriculum in secondary schools as specified in the guideline are; teachers' qualification, teaching method and teacher-students' ratio.

The involvement of qualified teachers in the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum in secondary schools cannot be overemphasized. In the NPE (2004) implementation guideline, the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) is prescribed as the minimum qualification for teaching. It is not an over statement to say that teaching is a profession of the experts and therefore should not be left in the hands of non-qualified and half-baked teachers. The teacher is the major instrument in the implementation of any curriculum not only social studies as a subject. The teachers therefore should be knowledgeable enough to understand the subject matter and the best way of implementing the curriculum. Nearly, all issues whether related to goals, learning, achievement, organization of programme or performance of the educational system involves comprehensive analysis of the roles of teachers, their behaviour, performances, remuneration, incentives, skills and how they are used by the system. The teacher is the main determinant of quality education, but if he/she is apathetic, uncommitted, uninspired, lazy, unmotivated, immoral, anti-social, the whole nation will be doomed (Aneke, 2015). Aguba (2006) maintains that if teachers are ignorant, they could be dangerous. Based on the above, it is obvious that the teachers' academic qualification can affect the implementation of social studies curriculum positively or negatively. Teachers are indeed one of the determinants of quality education of any nation provided that the teachers employ the appropriate method of instruction. Highly qualified teachers follow good approaches in teaching. Students taught by this grade of teachers may have greater academic performance because of positive attitude of the teachers. Aneke and Nwabuike (2015) opined that teachers' qualification affects the implementation of Social studies curriculum to a high extent. There is a need for Social studies teachers to be highly educated so as to be able to employ the appropriate teaching methods in the classroom.

Teachers' instructional methods facilitate the teaching and learning of social studies. Mezieobi as cited in Baba (2015) identified three methods that should be applied in the effective teaching of social studies as expository or class teaching methods, problem solving method and activity method. Social Studies instruction to young learners requires practical learning activities or exposure to issues endemic to the learning environment. The Social Studies teacher in order to achieve maximal teaching and learning of Social Studies in the classroom has to employ teaching techniques that will arouse learner's interest. Against this background, Akinyali, Bolarin, Daniyonu and Ayodele as cited in Baba (2015) remarks that students' transfer of values of their experiences to solve social problems can only be achieved through innovative and modern open and direct experience learning strategies of inquiry, discussion and clarification of their attitudes and values. Arisi and Kpangban as cited in Laraba (2015) emphasized that variety of instructional strategies in teaching social studies in junior secondary school was to take care of the individual differences among young learners. Udo in Samuel (2015) further added that the teaching of Social Studies requires multiple teaching methods in the Social Studies content, stress dynamic innovative societal issues which are affected by changes in attitudes, values and knowledge procedures. The method adopted by Social Studies teachers is a strong factor that can affect learners' level of achievement. Social studies is an emerging discipline in Nigeria, which has emphasized the use of innovative teaching strategies in order to strengthen the effective implementation of the social studies curriculum towards achieving vision 2025. However, this may be feasible provided if the teacher is given manageable size of students alongside other factors to facilitate his/her teaching. This calls for appropriate teacher-students' ratio in the classroom.

Teachers-students' ratio in class is another vital consideration in the NPE (2004) implementation guideline. It is stipulated in the guideline that, for UBE, the teacher-students' ratio should be:

1. 1:25 in a class, for Primary Education
2. 1:35 in a class for Junior Secondary and
3. 1:40 in a class for Senior Secondary respectively.

With this prescription, students' enrolment for the programme can be better monitored. For the secondary schools as a concern for this study, it can be noted that, a class with more than 35 students attached to a teacher will be considered overpopulated and vice versa. Osho, Aliyu, Okolie and Onifade (2014) reports that, there is a high enrolment of students in primary schools and as a result, most classes in the schools are overpopulated. Overpopulation leads to many other attendant problems such as inadequate instructional/infrastructural facilities to go round for effective implementation.

Statement of the Problem

Social Studies education is a discipline that is meant to develop in the learner positive attitudes, knowledge, skills, values and disposition for the enhancement and development of their own society. Social Studies when well taught in school serve as a problem solving discipline as it corrects the inadequacies of the individual and the society and strives to instill in individuals, social attitudes and values such as cooperation, charity, interdependence and ethical behaviours among other virtues.

Despite the teaching of this subject in secondary school, there is continued upsurge of social menace amongst citizens. This is a cause for worry and call for attention. Problems such as thuggery, cultism, and anxiety during examinations culminating into examination malpractice, sexual promiscuity, vandalism, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, and other forms of anti-social behaviour are being witnessed in the present society. These social issues were responsible for the introduction of Social Studies as a subject into the school curriculum as observed in the background. Why then are these social issues increasing? Can this be attributed to lack of proper implementation of the Social Studies curriculum? Hence, the researcher carried out an assessment of the implementation of Social Studies Curriculum in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B Educational Zone of Benue State.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the implementation of Social Studies Curriculum in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B Educational Zone of Benue State. Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. to ascertain the qualification of Social Studies teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State.
2. to assess the teaching methods used by Social Studies teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State.
3. ascertain the teacher-students' ratio in Social Studies classes in Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State.

Research Questions

The study sought answers to the following research questions.

1. What are the qualifications of Social Studies teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State?
2. What are the teaching methods used by Social Studies teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State?
3. What is the teacher-students' ratio in Social Studies classes in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State?

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in Zone B Educational Zone of Benue State. The population of the study is 283 teachers. This comprised 283 Social Studies teachers in the 103 public Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B Educational Zone of Benue State (SUBEB, 2020). The sample size for the study is 274. This comprised all the 274 Social Studies teachers that were on ground during the administration of the research instrument. Multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. A structured questionnaire and checklist were used as instruments for data collection. The questionnaire contains three sections A and B. Section A contains 7 items that provided information bordering on the Social Studies teachers' qualifications while Section B contains 7 items that provided information bordering on the teaching methods used by Social studies teachers in the study area. The checklist contains 2 items in which information on the teacher-students' ratio in the schools in the study area were checked upon by the researcher. The items on the questionnaire were trial tested to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire and it yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.79. The direct delivery and retrieval method was employed in the administration of the instruments to the respondents. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of Frequency Counts and Percentages to answer the research questions raised for the study. An average percentage of 50% which is the minimum benchmark for implementation of the Social Studies programme in each prescribed standard was used. A benchmark of 50% and above was considered implemented while below 50% was considered not implemented as regards to the items. For the items measuring availability, 50% and above was considered available for implementation while 50% below was considered not averagely available for implementation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1

What are the qualifications of Social Studies teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State? To answer this research question, data on the qualifications of Social Studies teachers teaching in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) in Zone B of Benue State were collected and analyzed as presented on Table 1

Table 1: Frequency Counts and Percentages of the Qualifications of Social Studies Teachers in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) Zone B of Benue State.

S/N	Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	NCE	81	29.6
2	OND	13	4.7
3	HND	19	6.9
4	B.Ed	77	28.1
5	BSc/B.A	22	8.4
6	BSc. (Ed).	51	18.2
7	M.Ed	9	3.3
8	MSc	2	0.7
9	PhD	0	0.0
	Total	274	100

Table 1 shows the qualifications of Social Studies teachers teaching in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) in Zone B of Benue State in frequency counts and percentages. The table revealed that majority (29.6%) of the teachers has NCE as their highest qualification. The table also revealed that 28.1% have B.Ed, 18.2% have B.Sc Ed, 8.4% have B.Sc/B.A, 6.9% have HND, 4.7% have OND, 3.3% have M.Ed and 0.7% has M.Sc. The table also revealed that none of the teachers have PhD.

Research Question 2

What are the teaching methods used by Social Studies teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State?

Table 2: Frequency count and percentages of teaching methods used by Social Studies teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State

S/N	Teaching Methods	Used	% Used	Not Used	% Not Used	Remark
1	Stimulation	66	24.1	208	75.9	Not Used
2	Laboratory	4	1.46	270	98.5	Not Used
3	Inquiry	143	52.2	131	47.8	Used
4	Project	30	10.9	244	89.1	Not Used
5	Dramatizations	201	73.4	73	26.6	Used
6	Questions and answer	253	92.3	21	7.7	Used
7	Field-trips	12	4.4	262	95.6	Not Used
8	Discussion	216	78.8	58	21.2	Used
9	Lecture	53	19.3	221	80.7	Not Used
10	Problem-solving	109	39.8	165	60.2	Not Used
11	Home assignment	179	65.3	95	34.7	Used
12	Construction methods	44	16.1	230	83.9	Not Used

Table 2 shows the teaching methods used by Social Studies teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State in frequency counts and percentages. The table revealed that the teaching methods used by teachers are; inquiry (52.2%), dramatization (73.4%), questions and answer (92.3%), discussion (78.8%) and home assignment (65.3%). The table further revealed that the teaching methods not used by teachers are; stimulation, laboratory, project, field-trips, lecture, problem solving and construction method.

Research Question 3

What is the teacher-students' ratio in Social Studies classes in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State?

Table 3: Frequency count and percentages of Teacher to Pupils Ratio in Social Studies classes in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State

S/N	No of Pupils	No of Teachers	Frequency	Percentage
1	40 and Below	1	93	33.9
2	41- and Above	1	181	66.1
	Total		274	100

Table 3 shows the frequency counts and percentages of teacher-students' ratio in Social Studies classes. The table revealed that 33.9 percent of the schools have teacher-students' ratio of one (1) teacher to 40 students and

below. The table also revealed that majority (66.1%) of the schools have teacher-students' ratio of one (1) teacher to 41 students and above.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study based on specific objective one and research question one revealed that the teachers possessed National Certificate Examination, Ordinary National Diploma, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Science and Art, Bachelor of Science Education, Master of Education and Master of Science. The study also found that Social Studies teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State are qualified for the implementation of Social Studies curriculum based on set minimum standard of NCE. The findings agree with that of Onipe (2004) who found that Social Studies teachers are qualified to teach the subject because they have acquired the minimum standard of qualification (NCE) for the implementation of the curriculum. The finding disagrees with that of Usulor (2014) who carried out a study on assessment and utilization of resources for effective implementation of Social Studies curriculum in junior secondary schools in Ebonyi Central Education Zone of Ebonyi State and found that most teachers that teach Social Studies are not qualified and are not Social Studies specialist.

The findings of this study based on specific objective two and research question two revealed that the teaching methods mostly used by teachers in most Junior Secondary Schools in Zone B of Benue State are; inquiry, dramatization, questions and answer, discussion and home assignment and these teaching methods adopted are in accordance with the curriculum implementation blueprint. The finding is in disagreement with that of Chukwu (2009) who investigated the status of teaching Social Studies in secondary schools in Ebonyi State and found that the method used by teachers in teaching social studies in secondary schools are brainstorming, lecture, questioning, problem solving, debate, note-taking and demonstration. The finding is not in agreement with that of Usulor (2014) who carried out a study on assessment and utilization of resources for effective implementation of Social Studies curriculum in junior secondary schools in Ebonyi Central Education Zone of Ebonyi State and found that Social Studies teachers do not use method prescribed by the curriculum for the implementation of the curriculum.

The findings of this study based on specific objective three and research question three revealed that majority of the Junior Secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State have teacher-students' ratio of one (1) teacher to 41 students and above which is not in accordance with the prescription of Social Studies curriculum implementation minimum standard of 1 teacher to 40 students. This finding conforms with that of Okobia (2009) who investigated the implementation of Social studies curriculum in junior public secondary school in Edo State in South-South Nigeria and found a student/teacher ratio of over 100:1.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that, even though the Social Studies teachers are qualified, the curriculum in most Junior Secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State is not well implemented as; some teaching methods prescribed in the curriculum are not adopted, teacher/students' ratio is not in accordance with the prescription.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Even though the Social Studies teachers possessed the minimum qualification for implementation of the curriculum, government should ensure that teachers with the minimum qualification are encouraged to obtain other higher qualifications.
2. School authorities should ensure that Social Studies teachers adopted the prescribed teaching methods in the implementation of the curriculum.
3. Also, government should employ more qualified Social Studies teachers so as to ensure that teachers/students' ratio should be in accordance with the prescription of Social Studies curriculum implementation minimum standard of 1 teacher to 40 students in a class.

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