

## **CHALLENGES TO SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Social studies has assumed a great dimension within the Nigerian Educational System to the extent that it is one of the core subjects in the Junior Secondary School and it has gained much ground at the University level and Colleges of Education in Nigeria. Realizing the importance of teaching and learning of social studies, an attempt has been made in this paper to identify and examine the qualities of a social-studies teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Thus four skills strands-intellectual Skill, planning skill, implementation skill, strands-intellectual skill, being identified as major qualities required of the social studies. Implementation of in-service education needed to enhance the effectiveness of social studies teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century may be an 'illusion' or wishful thinking' if a concerted effort is not made by the government to give due recognition to the teacher who is the heart of Nigeria's educational system and/or catalyst in the realization of national education aims and objectives.

### **BACKGROUND**

Social studies as a subject has assumed a great dimension within the Nigeria educational system to the extent that it is one of the core subjects in the junior secondary school and it has gained much ground at [the university and colleges of education in Nigeria. In a nutshell, (Adeyemi, 1990:29), said social studies education has become a major curricular innovation deemed fit in providing education for cultural identity and relevance, national integration and citizenship in a dynamic democracy. the quality of education received by the learners depends on the quality of the social studies teachers whom, according to Lassa [(19.96) brings the curriculum to life in the classroom. Lassa (1996:135) further stressed that the amount and quality of curricular experiences to which the learners are exposed obviously depends on the effectiveness of the teachers in managing the teaching - learning transaction. Iyewarun (1989) aptly stated that the teacher is a key figure in, the social studies teaching and learning experience (p. 101). the teacher is saddled with the responsibility objectives. the national educational objectives include the inculcation of nation consciousness and national unity and the inculcation of the right type of values and attitude for survival of the individual and Nigerian society. The social studies has a central and germane role to play in attaining these objectives because the basic function of social studies is to help pupils to inculcate social habits, attitudes and values as well as useful skills needed for the survival of the individual in the society and the development of the Nation in general.

Realizing the significance of the teaching and learning of social studies, an attempt has been made in this paper to identify and examine the qualities of social

studies teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Thus, four-skill strands-intellectual/content, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation skills have been identified as major skills required of the social studies teacher. However, the training of a social studies teacher cannot and is not a once-and for all matter but a continuing or life-long process. Therefore, a systematic planning and implementation of in service education is imperative .to enhance the performance and/or effectiveness of social studies teachers. In other words, it is advocated that a planned, coordinated in service education is needed on regular basis to update, and enrich the knowledge and competence of social studies teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### **THE SKILLS REQUIRED OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER**

Teaching has been described as a process whereby teachers facilitate the learning of factual knowledge, skills and values using methods that are adjudged to be morally acceptable and involving in particular, the conscious and active participation of the learner (Lassa. 1988: 113). Obemeata (1996:21), on the other hand, stated that if teachers are to perform the role expected of them satisfactorily, they should be of the right calibre, adequately trained in order to be competent in the subject which they are expected to teach. Lassa (1996:145) further stressed that 'Professionalism and competency should be the key factors for consideration in the recruitment of teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is therefore necessary, that the social studies teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should be adequately prepared to ensure effective teaching of social studies. Indeed, the social studies teacher should display mastery in each of the skill strands:- intellectual, planning, implementation and evaluation that are now briefly explained.

#### ***Intellectual Skill***

The teacher is the key agent in curriculum implementation. The teacher is and will continue to be both the major indicator as well as the major determinant of quality in education (Adesina, 1988:198). It is therefore imperative that the social studies teacher possesses a considerable deeper knowledge of what he is going to teach. A social studies teacher cannot communicate knowledge he himself does not possess. Therefore, he must be thoroughly knowledgeable in the subject than the students in line with the observation of Adeline (1990:173) that "the teacher must be master of his subject to enable, him acquire intellectual control of the pupils' mind".

#### ***Planning Skill***

The term Planning implies setting out in advance a pattern of action. It involves decisions that have to be made regarding what and how to do it, when to do it and by whom it is to be done. A plan is therefore a pre-determined course of action, which helps to provide purpose and direction. Indeed, Aina (1982:40) stated that good planning is the key to effective teaching and a sure means of successful, learning. The. planning process involves specific skills including the ability to select content, the ability to state precise objectives, the ability to select teaching and learning materials and the ability to construct or select appropriate evaluation devices.

The teacher of social studies is therefore expected to be skillful in planning which is a hallmark of a successful teacher.

### ***Implementation Skill***

Aina (1982:45) defined implementation as the 'exercise of teaching, facilitating learning to take place'. The teacher is expected to provide congenial atmosphere for learning. Implementation is thus a context within which formal teaching and learning activities take place. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century social studies teacher should have the skill to provide purposeful and meaningful experiences for the students, giving clear explanation and description and vivid concrete illustrations.

### ***Evaluation Skill***

To determine the effectiveness of teaching and to ascertain what knowledge, skills and values the pupils have gained, the social studies teacher has to develop or acquire the skill of evaluating instruction. The skill of evaluation also involves checking for the understanding and misunderstanding of the learners during interactive teaching; and finding out the learners understanding at the end of a given period. The skill of evaluation also involves constructing appropriate evaluation devices to ascertain the cognitive, the affective and psychomotor learning of the pupils.

## **MEASURES FOR ENHANCING THE SKILLS OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER**

It has been stressed in this paper that the social studies teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should possess four skill strands if he is to be referred to as expert in social studies teaching. Lewy (1977:170) stated that the expert is a person who 'possesses thorough knowledge and a high level of competence in a certain domain of human endeavour. Thus, the enhancement of these skills requires certain measures for the teacher to be more effective, committed and motivated in the classroom.

The measures include retraining of social studies teacher provision of sufficient teaching and learning material and raising the status of the teacher in the society. The training of the social studies teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should equip him with the basic knowledge, skill, values and attitudes necessary for entry into teaching profession. However, the training of social studies teacher is a long-life process. The pre serve training cannot solve completely the question of quality of competency of the teacher the preserve education only gives the teacher the right to start teaching. Therefore, there is the need for regular in service education for the social studies teacher in order to ensure his continued growth and development or in order for him to keep abreast of current trends in social studies and general education for:

“Social Studies is a dynamic and ever changing subject in the school curriculum. It does not, and cannot, remain static in a world where the relationship people have with each other, their world, and themselves are in constant state of change and

adaptation to new conditions which impinge on their lives (Kissock 1981:133)".

Essentially, the competence of the social studies teacher be improved or enriched only as he becomes aware of and put into practice the new developments. Thus, it can be safely asserted that the in service education would provide opportunity for the teacher to keep abreast with the current trends exchange ideas and share experience of frustration; meet the challenges ideas and demands of the pupils and to maintain and enhance high Professional standards.

The provision of appropriate and sufficient teaching and learning materials would enhance the performance of the social studies teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This implies that the funding of teacher education of which social studies education is an integral part should be given top priority attention by the government so that sufficient materials can be procured for effective teaching and learning. The social studies teacher should however be resourceful at all times for it is his responsibility to find out the needs of the pupils and to use his resourcefulness to meet the demands of the pupils. That is, in the absence of ideal materials, the teacher should be able to improvise materials for the teaching and learning of certain fact, skills and concepts. Thus teacher education (pre-service, and in-service) of social studies teacher should include how to devise, design and construct various materials that could be used for teaching and learning.

The status of the social studies teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be improved upon with a view of making him more effective, more dedicated and committed to his professional duties because it is the children of the nation who will be the first beneficiaries of enhanced status for teachers (Obanya 1988:43). If we also share the view that "the welfare of the teachers is the index of the quality and stability of the educational system" (Herbert, 1977). Then conscious effort should be made by the government and the community at large to improve the image of the social studies teacher.

## **CONCLUSION**

It has been argued in this paper that the social studies teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should be equipped with requisite skills that would enable him to function or perform effectively in the classroom. It is however contended that certain measures should be taken to enhance the quality of his performance. These measures include provision of opportunity through a planned in-service education to strengthen, upgrade and enrich his competence, provision of sufficient and relevant materials for teaching and learning and the raising of the status of the teacher.

At this point, it can be highlighted that social studies teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should be academically sound, and competent in the evaluation and implementation of instructions. The social studies teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should be a person who can match theory with practice and worthy of emulation in teaching, learning and character.

I, therefore, conclude that the Nigeria's search for development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century may be an illusion or wishful thinking if concerted effort is not made by the government to give due recognition to the teacher who is the heart of Nigeria's educational system and a catalyst in the realization of national educational aims and objectives.

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