

Selected Strategies on Ways of Improving the Teaching of Social Studies in Upper Basic Schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study focused on selected strategies on ways of improving the teaching of social studies in upper basic schools in Ebonyi State. The purpose of the study was to specifically ascertain if proper use of instructional materials could improve the teaching of social studies in upper basic schools in Ebonyi State, find out if teachers of social studies in Ebonyi State are qualified. The design of the study was a descriptive survey research. The population of the study comprised all 250 social studies teachers in Ebonyi State. Two research questions and one hypothesis was designed and tested to guide the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Selected Strategies on Ways of Improving the Teaching of Social Studies (SSWITSS) in Ebonyi State. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and Chi-square. Findings from the investigation revealed respondent's acceptance that all items of the questionnaire significantly improve the teaching of social studies, instructional materials and teacher's qualification significantly improve the teaching of social studies. It was recommended that both students and teachers should improvise instructional materials for effective teaching and learning delivery.

Key words: Selected strategies, improving, teaching, education, social studies, upper basic, Ebonyi

INTRODUCTION

Social studies are a subject that is compulsorily offered in secondary school, a core subject in upper basic schools in Nigeria as contained in the secondary school programmes and the national policy on education (Karimi, 2004). Gaining recognition and prominence of the subject in the secondary educational system in Nigeria communicates its importance and relevance to its recipients and the nation in general. This could have informed why Kazi (1994) defined social studies as citizenship education. In essence, it is the kind of education that is aimed at making one a good citizen.

Kissocks (1979) saw social studies as a programme of instruction which a society uses to instill in the students, the ideas, skills, values, attitudes and actions it considers important concerning the relationship which human beings have with one another. One of the critical elements in the teaching of social studies as in teaching and learning process in general is the teacher factor. Put succinctly, it refers to the commitment, knowledge, know-how and other activities that make the teacher effective and capable of ensuring the fulfillment of the student's quest for knowledge, character and skill. In all circumstances, therefore, the teacher has to be in the driver's seat, notwithstanding the profile of the classroom setting.

Severally, the importance of teachers in determining the quality of education is emphasized in many international reports (Fadeyiye, 2005; Saura and Dairo, 1997; Agwu *et al.*, 2002; Edinyang and Effiom, 2014). Fadeyiye (2005) stated that effective teachers are born and made. The born side is the natural inclination while the made side is the professional training acquired over a period of time. Owning and updating of the acquired skills and knowledge from time to time means improving them. The essence of improvement is to enable the teacher be in tune with the realities of the time as it concerns the teaching skills and methods in the light of technological innovations and other international best practices in education.

In line with the above, Mbang (2012) observed that teaching should be regarded as a profession: it is a form of public service which requires of teacher's expert knowledge and specialist skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuous studies. This way the improvement is achieved.

For the purpose of gaining clearer focus. He also observed that education is the aggregate of the process by means of which a person develops ability, attitude and other forms of behavior or (and sometimes negative) values in the society in which he lives.

From the above definitions, it is observed that social studies strive to make an individual's total personality especially as he relates with his immediate environment. The achievement of this, lies strongly on the application of an improved way as perceived by teachers in teaching social studies.

It seems that notwithstanding the above definitions of social studies, the subject is still faced with the problems of instructional material, teacher's qualifications among others.

Anonymous (2013) defined instructional material as the material which promotes the effectiveness of instruction and helps the teacher communicate more effectively. Instructional material is very vital and essential to teaching. Karima (2004) stressed that the use of instructional materials lies on the fact that abstract ideas, data and information expressed in printed pages become tangible and concrete when translated or reflected in form of instructional material or resource.

In classification of instructional materials, Igba (2005) classified them into audio-visual aids, graphics, printed, display materials and community resources. They further divided them as follows; radio sets, television, maps, chalkboard, charts, model museums, resource persons, community resource, among others. NTI Press (2010) maintained that chalkboard and textbooks are often used by social studies teachers as instructional materials. Many of these books are scarce, outdated and it constitutes a great handicap to the teachers of social studies (Shamija and Garba, 2011). Amidst all these, the problem of instructional materials still persists.

To counter this problem, Fadeyi (2005) observed that the teachers of social studies must explore facilities open to them especially within their locality and be prepared to improvise. He also asserted that the teachers of the subject should use different instructional materials in order to improve the teaching of social studies. To him, outdated textbooks and the one written by non social studies specialist who do not have useful information on environment should be replaced with the ones written by social studies specialists. Consequent upon this fact, there is great need to study teacher factors on ways of improving the teaching of social studies.

Furthermore, teacher's qualification seems to militate against the teaching of social studies. According to Ede (2013), there are very few teachers specifically trained to teach social studies. He also pointed out that for this reason; teachers are borrowed from various subject areas to teach social studies. Nweke (2014) stated that in various social studies departments of various schools, you find teachers of Geography, History, Economics,

Political Science, Agricultural Science and even Fine Arts among others who teach Social studies. This system does no good to the subject. This is probably because teachers who do not study the subject may skip difficult topics they do not have mastery by Shamija and Garba (2011).

If there must be an improvement in the teaching of social studies, then teacher's qualification is sacrosanct. For the problem of teacher's qualification to be solved, teachers who are qualified should be appointed by the government (Edinyang and Effiom, 2014). He also stated that care should be taken not to locate the teachers who are knowledgeable in social studies to other subject areas or institutions where social studies are not taught. For him, the government should initiate in service training programmes for the teachers of social studies in order to meet up with the demand for teachers in this field. Since, the teaching of social studies is a continuous endeavour and improvement needed, the problem of this study therefore is what will be the desirable way as perceived by teachers in handling the inadequacy and poor use of instructional material in relation to their qualifications? The result of the study will be significant because it will guide teachers to appreciate the influence of instructional materials in the teaching of social studies. It will also guide the government to appoint only qualified teachers to teach social studies for effective delivery and improved performance.

Purpose of the study: The main purpose of the study is to find out how selected strategies as ways of improving the teaching of social studies in upper basic schools in Ebonyi State. It specifically sought to determine the influence of instructional materials as selected strategies on ways of improving the teaching of social studies in upper basic schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Find out how teachers qualification influence the teaching of social studies in upper basic schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Find out how teachers years of experience influence the teaching of social studies in upper basic schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Research questions: Three research questions guided the study thus: how does instructional materials influence the teaching of social studies as selected strategies in upper basic schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria? How does teacher's qualification improve the teaching of social studies in upper basic schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. How do teacher's years of experience improve the teaching of social studies in upper basic schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis:

- H_{01} : the use of instructional materials does not significantly improve the teaching of social studies

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The design of the study was a descriptive survey. It is a design that sought information from many people without manipulation of any variable. The area of the study is Ebonyi State. Ebonyi State is made up of three educational zones Ebonyi North Central and South. The population of the study is made up of all 250 social studies teachers in upper basic schools in Ebonyi State. This implies that the whole population was used for the study. Structured questionnaire was the instrument for data collection titled Selected Strategies on Ways of Improving the Teaching of Social Studies (SSWITSS) in Ebonyi State. The face validation of the instrument was first carried out by presenting the draft to three senior lecturers in the Department of Arts and Social Science education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. They vetted each item in terms of sentence structure and adequacy of the instruments. Based on their suggestions, the instruments were modified to suit the study. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a trail testing was carried out using 33 respondents who were not included in the study. The instrument was assessed for reliability using the cronbach alpha. The test therefore yielded 0.82 indicating high reliability for the study. The research questions were answered on individual item basis using mean and standard deviation for research questions 1-2 while the only hypothesis was tested at an alpha level of 0.05 using χ^2 .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that all the respondents agreed that item 6 do not significantly improve the teaching of social studies while their responses to items 1-12 shows that those items significantly improve the teaching of social studies. The implication is that selected instructional materials improve the teaching of social studies.

From Table 2, the responses to the items on the instrument used for data collection, it was observed that they are significant differences between the mean ratings of social studies teachers in terms of years of experiences. It was also observed that there are significant differences between the mean rating of qualified and non-qualified.

Social studies teachers. These differences influence their use of instructional materials and this influence the

Table 1: Mean value of instructional materials in the teaching of social studies

Item No.	Use of instructional materials	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Textbooks do improve the teaching of social studies	9.1	1.19	Agree
2	Radio sets do improve the teaching of social studies	9.2	1.11	Agree
3	Television does improve the teaching of social studies	9.6	1.14	Agree
4	Chalkboard does improve the teaching of social studies	11.3	1.23	Agree
5	Charts do improve the teaching	9.8	1.14	Agree
6	Maps do improve the teaching of social studies	3.8	1.19	Disagree
7	Models do improve the teaching of social studies	9.4	1.17	Agree
8	Real objects do improve the teaching of social studies	8.5	1.12	Agree
9	Museums do improve the teaching of social studies	9.6	1.15	Agree
10	Artifacts do improve the teaching of social studies	9.3	1.16	Agree
11	Resource Persons do improve the teaching of social studies	8.5	1.17	Agree
12	Community resources do improve the teaching of social studies	10.1	1.15	Agree

Grand mean of Table 1 = 9.01

teaching of social studies. In Table 3, all the items agreed that teacher's year of experience influence the teaching of social studies upper basic schools in Ebonyi State (Table 4).

Hypothesis:

- H_{01} : instructional materials do significantly improve the teaching of Social studies
- H_1 : (χ^2) table for instructional materials in the teaching of social studies

The obtained χ^2 calculated is 28.9 while the critical value is 43.77. Since, the χ^2 calculated is greater than the χ^2 critical value, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted. It means that instructional materials do significantly improve the teaching of social studies.

Summary of findings: The investigation of the study shows that the use of instructional materials do significantly improve the teaching of social studies in upper basic schools. The study reveals that qualified teachers with long years of experience significantly improve the teaching of social studies in upper basic schools.

Result of data analysis in Table 1 shows that the use of instructional materials significantly improve the teaching of social studies. The grand mean of Table 1 is 9.01 which is >2.5. For hypothesis 1 in Table 4, the χ^2 calculated is 28.9 while the χ^2 critical value is 43.77, therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that instructional materials do improve the teaching of social studies.

Table 2: Influence of teachers qualification

Variables	No. of teachers	Percentage	Programme at hand	No. of teachers	Percentage
Social studies specialists					
NCE social studies	75	30	Sandwich WASP	21, 18	21, 18
	50	25	Sandwich WASP	17, 12	17, 12
	25	20	Sandwich WASP	11, 10	11, 10
BEd Social Studies	50	25	Sandwich WASP	11	11
Total	200	100%		100	100%
Non-specialist social studies teachers					
OND Agricultural Science; 1-5	9	6.00	Sandwich WASP	16	10.67
HND Agricultural Science; 1-5	11	7.33	Sandwich WASP	17	11.33
Mass Communication HND; 1-5	12	8.0	Sandwich WASP	15	10.00
HND Marketing; 1-5	13	8.67	Sandwich WASP	-	-
BEd Fine Arts; 5-10	8	5.33	Sandwich WASP	15	10.00
BS Eds Geography; 5-10	20	13.33	Sandwich WASP	16	10.67
BSc History; 5-10	19	12.67	Sandwich WASP	17	11.33
BSc Ed Economics; 5-10	10	6.67	Sandwich WASP	-	-
BSc Ed Economics; 5-10	13	8.67	Sandwich WASP	13	8.67
BSc Political Science; 5-10	11	7.33	Sandwich WASP	-	-
BSc Ed Political Science; 5-10	12	8.00	Sandwich WASP	13	8.67
BS Eds Sociology; 5-10	5	3.33	Sandwich WASP	16	10.67
BSc Biology; 5-10	4	2.67	Sandwich WASP	-	-
BS Eds Chemistry; 5-10	3	2.00	Sandwich WASP	12	8.00
Total	150	100%		150	100%

Total no. of social studies teachers = 100

Table 3: Data showing teachers years of experience that enhance the teaching of social studies in upper basic schools in Ebonyi State

Item No.	Influence of experienced social studies teachers	X	SD	Decision
1	Experienced teachers cover social studies syllabus in line with the examination bodies requirement	9.1	1.17	Agree
2	Experienced teachers understand likely questions of different examination bodies	8.3	1.14	Agree
3	Experienced teachers prepare students adequately for external examinations	8.5	1.15	Agree
4	Experienced teachers use their wealth of experienced to write useful social studies textbooks	9.2	1.12	Agree
5	Experienced teachers understand student's individual differences and provide instructional programme that will suit their abilities	9.3	1.01	Agree

Grand mean = 8.88

Table 4: Social studies discussed as sampling

Item No.	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	Textbooks	45 (43)	65 (63)	60 (65)	80 (79)	250
2	Radio set	40	70	60	80	250
3	Television	50	60	70	70	250
4	Chalkboard	40	70	60	80	250
5	Charts	45	70	65	80	250
6	Maps	40	60	70	80	250
7	Models	35	50	75	90	250
8	Real objects	40	70	60	80	250
9	Museums	45	65	70	80	250
10	Artifacts	40	70	60	80	250
11	Resource Persons	50	45	60	70	250
12	Community resource	45	60	70	80	250
	Total	515	755	780	950	3000

χ^2 Calculated = 28.9; χ^2 Critical value = 43.77

Findings from Table 1 show that respondents in items 1 agree that the use of textbooks does not significantly improve the teaching of social studies. In agreement with this, Ikwumelu and Bozimo (2000) suggested that textbooks could be used as a reinforcing instrument as a lesson already taught. They also maintained that textbooks could be used as summary of a learning exercise. A discussion on the qualities of a good leader for example, can be conducted by calling the attention of the students to a topic such as patriotism in

any social studies textbook. Mezieobi also noted that textbooks can be used in a variety of ways. For instance, explanatory reading is to find out what the unit is all about and to establish a common background of basic information.

Findings from Table 1 show that respondents agree that television improve the teaching of social studies. Edinyang *et al.* (2014) observed that television may be of tremendous assistance in enriching and visualizing social studies programme which the teacher cannot accomplish through the use of books and other conventional learning resources. Nweke (2014) also observed that television programmes are highly motivating and interesting. They span over both time and space in bringing relevant events into the classroom in capsule form. He maintained that television programmes usually transport students to the areas they are studying and shows them details they should probably miss if they were actually there.

Finding from Table 1 shows that respondents agree that resource persons significantly improve the teaching of social studies. Ikwumelu and Bozimo (2000) asserted that the presence of a resource person in a classroom excites the students and make the subject as real and practical as possible. This indeed brings variety in

learning and lessons the research of the teacher. It encourages unity between the school and community and gives a sense of pride to the visitor. Students are challenged to accept new ideas from a source different from a usual one hence promotes teaching and learning in social studies.

Findings from Table 1 show that respondents agree that community resources significantly improve the teaching of social studies. That is why Ede (2013) observed that the community is a living workshop where children can have first hand experiences with industry, government, service agencies and social services. As students interact with the social environment, biases will be reduced and this promotes learning hence the objectives of social studies education.

Result of data analysis in Table 2 using percentage shows that 100 teachers (55.53%) are social studies specialists while 80 teachers (44.47%) are non specialist. Out of 100 teachers (55.53%) who are specialists in social studies education, 50 teachers (80%) with different years of experience are engaged in different programmes like sandwich research and study programmes to up-date their grade levels while 34 teachers (20%) with different years of experiences engaged in sandwich, research and study programmes to enhance their knowledge and for better pay. In line with the above, Edinyang *et al.* (2014) in his study “qualitative manpower and material requirement for the implication of social studies education in Nigeria” noted that Ede (2013) identified the characteristics of effective teachers. According to him, such teachers are skillful in guiding the learning intelligence as well as having broad background of understanding of both the subject matter they teach and the general cultural materials of the subject. The significance of Igba (2005) view to this study is found in the emphasis on the need to acquire knowledge on the understanding of the subject matter that the teacher wants to teach. Unfortunately, this attribute of teacher’s effectiveness has not been acquired by many teachers of social studies. This may be due to the newness of the subject in the school curriculum, lack of in-service training and short years of experience in service. This also reveals that the population of graduate social studies teachers is low because of the relative newness of the subject in secondary school’s curriculum coupled with the fact that only few high institutions offer the subject as a core subject now.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion of the major findings of the study, it is concluded that: there is no significant difference in the opinion of teachers on the use of

instructional materials for the effective teaching and learning of social studies. Qualification and years of experience significantly affect teacher factors and use of instructional materials in the teaching and learning social studies in upper basic schools in Ebonyi State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this study, the researcher made the following recommendations. Students and teachers should be encouraged to improvise some instructional materials and to ensure their availability in upper basic schools for use in the teaching and learning of social studies. Incentives should be provided as award, bonuses and a special social studies teacher’s allowance. This will go a long way to reorienting the teachers for effective teaching and learning. There is need for Ebonyi State Government through the Ministry of Education Board to formulate a policy that will ensure availability of qualified social studies teachers in upper basic schools system while the existing teachers could be upgraded through in-service, training, workshops, seminars and regular instructional supervision.

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