

The Challenges of Social Studies Educators for Effective Teacher Preparation and Implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigerian Junior Secondary Schools

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The UBE (universal basic education) is one of the laudable reforms in education in Nigeria, which is implemented through social studies instruction. This study investigated social studies teachers' capability for effective implementation of the UBE in junior secondary schools in Orlu education zone of Imo State of Nigeria. The study is a survey which made use of 20 social studies teachers in public schools as the sample. Results from the study indicate that social studies teachers are not adequately aware of the objectives of UBE. In addition, teacher training institutions have not prepared social studies teachers sufficiently for the implementation of the UBE programme, their teaching does not inject appreciable creativity in the learner, and teachers do not use ITCs (information and communication technologies) in the discharge of instruction as they are not ICT-skilled. Teachers are not sufficiently exposed in their training to reforms in education, specifically the UBE and that the teaching of social studies is not functional in injecting practical skills and vocational training in the learner, which is the basic objective of UBE. Implications of the study and recommendations are delineated.

Keywords: UBE (universal basic education), teacher preparation, social studies education

Introduction

The UBE (universal basic education) is one of the boldest attempts in the national history of educational development to equalize the access to literary education in Nigeria. National development in all its entirety is visibly realized and achieved with productive labour force who are adequately informed and skilled to initiate their intellectual ideas, creativity, and enterprise into the political, social, economic, and technological transformation of the polity. National economic development is anchored on collective qualitative transformation initiative contribution of citizens through qualitative education pioneered by teachers who are sufficiently prepared to be knowledgeable on evolving curriculum innovations in terms of its requisite contents, pedagogies, values, and skills components geared at making the learner functionally productive in a dramatic transforming society.

The National Policy on Education (2004) made social studies a core subject in the junior secondary schools in Nigeria, with the objectives of inculcating in the learner in integrated forms, basic skills, values, and attitudes for useful living. This is in line with the objectives and goals of the UBE programme at the junior

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secondary school level. In simple terms, the effective implementation of the UBE in junior secondary school through social studies instruction is inextricably dependent on quality social studies teachers who are adequately informed about what to teach, how to teach, attitudes, values, and skills expected to be injected in the learner for the realization of functional educational goals. Nworgu (2007) and Ibiam (2007) in their respective studies established that most social studies teachers are not sufficiently informed about the demands, implications, and objectives of education reforms in Nigeria, specifically the UBE. This anomaly is likely to affect the potency, worth, and relevance of instruction delivered to the learner.

Adamechi and Romaine (2000) and Ukeje (2000) agreed that the focus of the UBE in junior secondary schools is to equip the learner with practical, creative skills, values, and ingenuity to become a functional member of the society. Nwazuoke (2007) thought that this is realizable when the social studies teacher integrates creativity process in the classroom instruction, as a means of energizing the thought processes of the learners in thinking reflectively about their personal and national problems. It is therefore instructive that social studies teachers should be adequately trained by teacher preparing institutes of education, the universities and colleges of education by enriching their social studies teacher education programmes with current educational reforms and policies, as well as emerging contemporary issues. This will make the social studies teacher functional in the implementation of the UBE programme as well as being sufficiently acquainted with educational reforms and evolving contemporary issues. Afe (2003) said that teacher quality and effectiveness is imperative for realistic implementation of UBE in Nigeria.

Mezieobi and Osakwe (2003), Esu and Inyang-Abia (2004), and Mezieobi (2007) have indicated that the essence of social studies instruction in junior secondary school is to equip the learner with attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills for functional living in the Nigerian society. It is therefore imperative that effective implementation of social studies instruction in line with vocational ideals of UBE be focused on equipping the learner with entrepreneurial and creative skills for productive living. Social studies education classroom instruction ought to be innovative in exposing the learner to discover knowledge, create ideas, and think scientifically. This is a veritable process of exposing and preparing the learners to become job creators rather than job seekers in future. In their perception of existent social studies classroom interaction process, Ukadike and Iyamu (2007) reported that social studies teachers are yet to involve learners adequately in active learning engagement and condemned the expository method which is responsible for the poor implementation of the social studies curriculum and consequent poor appreciation by learners of knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills in social studies curriculum.

The quality of the social studies teachers and the effectiveness of their instructional strategies in the classroom are crucial in the effective implementation of the UBE programme. Against this background, Ibiam (2007) noted that rapid technological changes in the society render most often learned materials and information in the social studies classroom obsolete if the teacher is not resourceful to embrace dynamic changes in the society. Furthermore, Maduewesi (2001) and Ibiam (2007) observed that educational innovations are not instantly integrated into school curricula at all levels in Nigeria. Obuh (2007) discovered that social studies teachers have not demonstrated high competence in the use of ITCs (information and communication technologies) in the teaching of social studies.

The Statement of the Problem

The more teachers who are qualified and well trained the greater the success in achieving educational

reforms (Usman, 2002, p. 10). In addition, Mkpa (1987), Eyibe (1998), Kanno (2004), and Ciwar (2005) identified effective social studies teachers as crucial elements in the effective implementation of worthwhile school curriculum, maintaining that this has to be dependent on the quality of their teacher preparation, the level of skills teachers are equipped with and that quality basic education would be elusive without quality social studies teachers and teaching. The reported instructional lapses in the effective implementation of social studies curriculum, Ukadike and Iyamu (2007) reinforced by Abdulahi (1982), Nwagbo (1997) and Achime (2004) amongst others, who condemned social studies teachers over reliance on expository teaching approach instead of the inquiry approach which promotes learners' investigative skills and scientific and critical thinking ability in tackling social problems, is a hindrance to the effective implementation of the social studies curriculum as to realize the objectives of UBE. To ascertain the present status of social studies teachers in effective implementation of the UBE programme, this study is investigating the extent to which social studies teachers are aware of the objectives of the UBE?

How well is social studies taught to inculcate creative skills in the learner and to what extent are ICTs used in the teaching of social studies?

The Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to find out social studies teachers instructional capability for effective implementation of the UBE programme in junior secondary schools in Orlu education zone of Imo State of Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to determine the quality of the teacher preparation programmes in terms of:

(1) If social studies teachers are aware of the objectives of the quality of the teacher preparation programme in terms of UBE;

(2) If social studies is taught to inject creative skills in the learner;

(3) The extent of use of ICTs in teaching social studies in junior secondary school in a UBE programme;

(4) The degree to which social studies teachers are exposed to reforms in the education industry;

(5) The extent to which the existent social studies curriculum is adequate in realizing functional education.

Research questions are as follows:

(1) To what extent are social studies teachers aware of the objectives of the UBE?

(2) How far is social studies taught to inculcate creative skills in the learner?

(3) To what extent are ICTs used in the teaching of social studies?

(4) To what degree are social studies teachers exposed to reforms in the education industry in their training?

(5) Is the existing junior secondary school social studies curriculum content adequate to realize functional education?

Methodology

The design adopted for this study is survey, which is aimed at investigating social studies teachers' level of awareness of the objectives and capability of effective implementation of the UBE programme.

Area of Study

This study was carried out in Orlu education zone of Imo State of Nigeria. Orlu education zone comprises 10 local government areas, namely, Ideato North, Ideato South, Njaba, Isu, Nkwere, Oru East, Oru West, Orsu,

Nwangele, and Orlu local government areas.

The Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of all social studies teachers in the Orlu education zone of Imo State. There are 47 social studies teachers in public junior secondary schools in the Orlu education zone of Imo State. This is contained in a detailed information manual with specific number of social studies teachers in each of the three education zones of Imo State.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample consisted of 20 social studies teachers that were selected based on two proportionate stratified random sampling techniques. The social studies teachers were stratified against local government area, in this respect, two social studies teachers were selected from 10 local government areas comprising the Orlu education zone.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for this study was a structured questionnaire titled "SSTAUO" (social studies teachers' awareness of UBE objectives), which was designed to answer the five research questions. It has 15 items structured on a modified 4-point Likert scale of "SA (Strongly agree)", "A (Agree)", "D (Disagree)", and "SD (Strongly disagree)" to elicit information about the research questions.

Validation of Instrument

The instrument was validated by two social studies lecturers and one expert in measurement and evaluation from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In this respect, weak items were dropped or rephrased for qualitative evaluation.

Reliability of Instrument

The reliability of instrument was established through a test retest method. A pilot study was embarked on in Okigwe urban area of Imo State, with social studies teachers who were not target of the study. After a time interval of two weeks, the same respondents were used, and the result showed a positive reliability of 0.82, meaning that the instrument is adequate for the study.

Administration of Instrument

The copies of SSTAUO questionnaire were personally distributed and collected by the researcher and a trained field assistant who is a graduate of social studies. This process yielded 100% retrieval of administered questionnaires from sampled social studies teachers in Orlu education zone.

Method of Data Analysis

Frequencies and percentages were used for the analysis of the data. Data collected were used to answer the five research questions designed for the study.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: To what extent are social studies teachers aware of the objectives of the UBE?

Sixty percent of the respondents observed that social studies teachers are not adequately informed of the objectives of UBE, while 70% of the respondents admitted that non-awareness of the objectives of UBE constitutes a gap in the effective reflection of social studies instruction in line with the objectives of UBE, 55% of the respondents agreed that social studies teachers will effectively implement the social studies curriculum,

when the objectives are exposed (see Table 1). The finding is that social studies teachers are not aware of the objectives of UBE.

Table 1

Showing Teachers Awareness of the Objectives of UBE

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	Social studies teachers are not adequately informed of the objectives of UBE	12 (60%)	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	20 (100%)
2	Teachers inadequate awareness of the objectives of UBE constitute a gap in the effective implementation of social studies content to reflect the objectives of UBE	14 (70%)	2 (10%)	Nil (0%)	4 (20%)	20 (100%)
3	Teachers awareness is likely to improve the teaching of social studies to reflect the objectives of UBE	11 (55%)	5 (25%)	2 (10%)	2 (0%)	20 (100%)

Research Question 2: How far is social studies taught to inculcate creative skills?

Based on the findings, 50% of the respondents agreed that social studies is taught in a manner to inculcate knowledge, values, and skills to address societal problems in the learner, which is in line with the objectives of UBE in inculcating life-long education. There is a strong disapproval by 45% respondents that the teaching of social studies does not inspire skills as questioning, reflective thinking, passing of critical judgment, and analysis of issues in the learner, which may arise from teacher’s classroom dominance of instruction. Forty percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that learners are not often exposed to field study and inquiry projects which are capable of enhancing creative skills in the learner (see Table 2). The opinion of the findings is that present status of teaching social studies in junior secondary schools is yet to appreciably inject creative skills in the learner.

Table 2

Showing Social Studies Teachers Capability in Instilling Creative Potentials in the Learner

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
4	Social studies is taught in a manner that the learner can address the problems of the society.	10 (50%)	5 (25%)	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	20 (100%)
5	The teaching of social studies inspires and instills the skills of questioning, thinking, judging, discussion, and analysis in the learner.	4 (20%)	5 (25%)	4 (20%)	9 (45%)	20 (100%)
6	Students are often exposed to field study and inquiry projects.	4 (20%)	4 (20%)	4 (20%)	8 (40%)	20 (100%)

Research Question 3: To what extent are ICTs used in the teaching of social studies?

Table 3

Showing Social Studies Utilization of ICTs

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
7	Social studies teachers effectively utilize ICTs in teaching social studies.	1 (5%)	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	11 (55%)	20 (100%)
8	ICTs as the internet, computer, and Websites for (journals, periodicals, magazines and books) are available in schools for use.	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	6 (30%)	12 (60%)	20 (100%)
9	Social studies teachers are willing to be ICT skills.	14 (70%)	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	0 (%)	20 (100%)

Fifty-five percent of social studies teachers sampled disagreed that ICTs are not effectively utilized in the teaching of social studies. In addition, 60% of the respondents disagreed in strong terms that ICT materials are

not available for teaching social studies, only insignificant 5% of the respondents strongly agreed. Interestingly, 70% of the teachers sampled indicated willingness to be ICT skilled and compliant (see Table 3). There was no strong disapproval. The result of the finding established that ICTs materials are not significantly available in schools; teachers do not use them in teaching social studies as they are not ICT-skilled.

Research Question 4: To what degree are social studies teachers exposed to reforms in the education industry in their training?

Fifty percent of respondents significantly disagreed that social studies teachers are not highly exposed to reforms in education. While 40% disagreed that teacher preparatory institutions adequately expose teacher in training to contemporary education reforms, such as UBE amongst others. Thirty percent agreed while 20% strongly agreed. Teacher training institutions should emphasize basic reforms in education as part of the requirement for the production of effective social studies teachers in this millennium. Seventy-five percent of the respondents strongly agreed, while 25% agreed that conferences, seminars, and workshops are avenues to reinforce the objectives of UBE, and there was no opposition to this opinion (see Table 4).

Table 4

Teacher Preparatory Institutions Adequately Expose Teacher in Training to Contemporary Education

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
10	Social studies teachers are highly exposed to reforms in education.	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	10 (50%)	20 (100%)
11	Teachers preparing institutions adequately expose teachers in training on contemporary education reforms as UBE amongst others.	4 (20%)	6 (30%)	8 (40%)	2 (10%)	(100%)
12	Conferences, seminars, workshops, and enrichment of social studies teachers education curricula would further expose teachers to the objectives of UBE.	15 (75%)	5 (25%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	(100%)

Research Question 5: Is the existing junior secondary school social studies curriculum content adequate to realize functional education?

Forty percent disagreed that the teaching of social studies does not inject practical skills, while 30% strongly disagreed. The implication is that teaching of social studies is still literary. In addition, 40% of respondents strongly disagreed that learners are not taught enough vocation for life sustaining. Forty-five percent strongly agreed that social studies curriculum is adequate for promoting citizenship education, and this position is further supported by 30% respondents, and 15% disagreed while only 10% strongly disagreed (see Table 5). Therefore, the existence of social studies curriculum is functional in the development of citizenship education, but deficient in injecting practical skills and vocational training in the learner, which is the basic objective of UBE.

Table 5

Showing the Adequacy of Social Studies Curriculum in the Realization of Functional Education

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
13	Does the teaching of social studies inject practical creative skills in the learner.	3 (15%)	3	8 (40%)	6 (30%)	20 (100%)
14	Learners are taught enough life sustaining vocation for life sustenance.	2 (10%)	(15%)	6 (30%)	8 (40%)	20 (100%)
15	The value content of social studies curriculum is adequate in developing effective citizenry attitudes in the learner.	9 (45%)	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	20 (100%)

Discussion of Findings

Findings from this study established that social studies teachers are not adequately aware of the objectives of the UBE programme. This is in consonance with the respective studies carried out by Nworgu (2007) in Nigeria and Ibiam in Kogi State of Nigeria. The quality of teacher awareness of the objectives of UBE is crucial in its effective implementation through social studies instruction. In addition, social studies are yet to be adequately taught to enhance creative skills in the learner. This supports Ukadike and Iyamu (2007) who opined that social studies teachers have not involved learners in active learning through the inquiry process, instead they relied on expository method of instruction which exalts passivity in the classroom. Equally, Abdulahi (1982), Nwagbo (1997), and Achime (2004) condemned expository method of teaching social studies in Nigeria and supported the inquiry process which injects creative and scientific skills in the learner.

Furthermore, research results of this study revealed that ICTs are not used in teaching social studies; this limits the resource base of the teacher. In addition, the social studies teachers are not ICT-skilled but have expressed interest and motivation in being ICT-skilled. This finding is in agreement with the works of Usman (2002) and Obuh (2007) who discovered that social studies teachers have no competence at all in the use of ICTs. The interest of social studies teachers to be ICT-skilled was supported by Ibiam's (2007) work. This study further established that social studies teachers are not exposed to reforms in education, even by teacher preparing institutions of colleges of education, institutes of education, and faculties of education of universities in Nigeria. This is worrisome as Mkpa (1987), Eyibe (1998), Kanno (2004), and Ciwar (2005) reflected in their studies and pointed out that teacher quality and skills as a result of their preparation would enhance the worthwhile implementation of the UBE programme. Maduewesi (2001) and Ibiam (2007) confirmed from their studies that education innovations and reforms are not immediately integrated into the school curricula of schools in Nigeria.

It could also be seen from the findings of this study that the existing social studies curriculum is not functional in terms of injecting practical skills and vocational training in the learner. In this respect, Kanno (2004) called on the social studies teachers' to be resourceful to parade modern ideas. The non functionality of the social curriculum runs counter to Adamechi and Romaine (2000) and Ukeje (2002) who postulated that UBE is meant to inject functional education in the learner.

Implications of the Study

The implications of the study are as follows:

- (1) Teacher preparing institutions should adequately expose social studies teachers to curriculum reforms and innovations in education;
- (2) There is a need to restructure and re-strategize the method of teaching social studies in Nigeria's tertiary institutions and secondary schools;
- (3) Creativity process should be integrated into the curricula of social studies teacher education of tertiary institutions in Nigeria;
- (4) The urgent need and use of communication technologies in classroom instruction is a challenging task to social studies educators, the public, government, and stakeholders in education, and it must be provided for effective teaching and learning in social studies.

Conclusions

The effectively trained, informed, and skill-equipped social studies teacher is an asset to the effective implementation of the UBE. This is more realistic when the social studies teacher is knowledgeable about the objectives of UBE, which will be a benchmark for the teacher's instructional delivery guide in the classrooms. To achieve functional education, the learner needs to be exposed to practical tasks and provided with ample opportunities to think reflectively, scientifically, and creatively. Teacher preparatory institutions of Nigerian universities, institutes of education, and colleges of education should constantly enrich, revise, and review their programmes to include contemporary education reforms as UBE amongst others. This step will ultimately enhance social studies teachers' quality for effective implementation of UBE in junior secondary schools in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The recommendations are as follows:

- (1) Social studies teachers' quality, awareness, consciousness, and adequate knowledge of the objectives and focus of UBE are fundamental in the effective implementation of the functional social studies curriculum (Mezieobi, 2007, p. 5);
- (2) The use of effective inquiry teaching method will enhance high learning and promote creativity;
- (3) Social studies teachers should be exposed to contemporary reforms in education through conferences, seminars, workshops, and cooperative learning;
- (4) The training of social studies teachers with appropriate ICTs competencies is a prerequisite for effective use of ICTs in teaching social studies.

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