Reviving Social and Peaceful Co-Existence through the Implementation of Social Studies Curriculum in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper in an attempt to review issues regarding the relevance of social studies curriculum in promoting social and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria discusses conceptual analysis which covers the concepts of education, social studies, curriculum, curriculum implementation, peace and peaceful co-existence. The paper also explores the relevance of social studies curriculum in inculcating social and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria, challenges bedeviling effective implementation of social studies curriculum for social and peaceful co-existence which include: over dependence and application of expository/presentation teaching methods; employment of non-professionals to teach social studies among others. The paper recommends that real social studies professionals should be employed to teach the subject at all level of educational institutions among others. The paper is relevant considering it place in reviewing how social studies curriculum be used to promote social and peaceful co-existence when individual(s) passed through appropriate educational institutions that offer social studies course and hammering on effective implementation of it's curriculum.

Key Words: Curriculum Implementation, Peaceful Co-Existence and Social Studies

Introduction

The Nigerian society today is in serious dilemma of social and physical conflict. This is so because of the frequent cases of insurgency, kidnapping, corruption, prostitution, truancy, juvenile delinquency among others which are in one way or the other affect the social and peaceful co-existence of the nation. Despite the fact that social studies curriculum is been taught at basic level (lower, middle and upper basic) and tertiary education level (N.C.E., undergraduate, masters and Ph.D.) with the major aim to unite the vast and diverse ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria; promote values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence which is needed to cement and exert efforts towards reducing crises between groups as well as building positive attitude and behavior in the mind of citizens. It is against this background that the paper intended to review current issues regarding the implementation of social studies curriculum for social and peaceful co-existence in educational institutions in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

For this paper to be attractive and courageous; key concepts and terms of the paper were conceptualized using a common language with the view to guide and simplify the understanding of the readers. It is on the basis of this, the paper discusses the concepts of education, social studies, curriculum, curriculum implementation, peace and peaceful co-existence among others.

Concept of Education

Education is the process of providing information to an inexperienced person to help him/her develop physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, politically and economically (Offorma, 2009). According Opoh (2011), education is an activity which goes on in the society;

whose aims and objectives depend on the nature, need and aspiration of the society in which it takes place. It is widely perceived and acknowledged as an instrument per excellence for the transformation of any human society. Obanya (2002) posited that throughout history, societies, both developed and underdeveloped, complex and non-complex, have used education as a relevant instrument for effecting desirable social, economic, political and technological transformation. According to Chidebulu (2009), education is a process of cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of an individual with a view to molding the individual for contribution to the development of the community and promotion of cultural heritage. This means that if one is educated, he tends to develop himself and become productive in the society, thereby promoting his cultural heritage. In view of the above, one can say that education is a process of imparting valuable knowledge, skills and attitude to shape human behaviuor and contribute positively to the development of individual and general society.

Concept of Social Studies

Social studies deal with a wide range of issues in man's multifaceted environment. It is a reformatory school instruction designed to equip learners with desirable attitudes, values, skills and knowledge for cohesive social existence in Nigerian society (Mezieobi, 2011). Mbaba (2007), conceptualized social studies as a programme of study a society uses to instill in students or learners the knowledge, skills, attitudes and action it considers important concerning the relationship human beings have with each other, their world and themselves. This means that social studies is an educational programme by which behaviours, attitudes, norms and values considered worthwhile are preserved and inculcated to the learners for effective participation in society. It is an interdisciplinary study of issues and problems that can help the learners to become civically competent in dealing with the problems of survival in their environment (Arise, 2011). Social studies education is the science of doing or making (creative ideas, social inventions and objects)….that will enable man interact with (and contribute productively to his) environment (development) efficiently (Orisa in Ubah, & Shu'aibu, 2014). Looking at the opinions of authors and scholars on the concept of social studies; the paper is hereby saying that social studies curriculum is enough to promote social and peaceful co-existence when implemented the way it should be.

Concept of Curriculum

Curriculum as a concept and social catalyst refers to those planned educational contents, experiences and activities as well as guidance and vocational oriented services offered by teachers and other related to learners under the auspices of the school (Tanner & Tanner, 1980). It is considered to be the complete atmosphere to transform peoples' life (Obanya, 2016). Curriculum also defined by Indiana Department of Education (2010), as the planned interaction of pupils with instructional content, materials, resources and processes for evaluating the attainment of educational objectives. Denga in Yusuf (2012), views curriculum as a planned and unplanned experience which is exposed to learners within and outside the school environment for their collective growth. To this end, curriculum can be seen as all the learning activities planned and unplanned, guided and executed by school with the total aim of transforming the societal members and achieve its goals and objectives.

Concept of Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation is defined by Obanya (2004), as day-to-day activities which school management and classroom teachers undertake in the pursuit of the objective of any given curriculum. Gbamanja (2009) asserts that "implementation is the stage at which the

planned curriculum will be actualized". The decision taken on what should be studied and how it should be studied will be implemented or put into practice at this stage. Curriculum implementation entails putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study, syllabuses and subjects (Chikumbi & Makamure 2000). Considering the above, curriculum implementation is a process of putting a designed and well planned curriculum in to practice. Curriculum implementation is not restricted to sheer translation of curriculum proposals or decision into practice. It involves a complex of activities, materials, personnel and other factors and when appropriately harnessed constitute integral parts of curriculum implementation. These include the schools, which are the major implementation theater, the teachers, curriculum materials, students, teacher training institutions, administrative and political factors, examination bodies, and the public or community members (Mezieobi 2013). This opinion or definition given by Mezieobi is said to be comprehensive, because, it embraced all the stakeholders responsible for curriculum implementation. In spite of the foregoing definitions, the actualization and implementation of social studies curriculum seems to be ineffective due to the problem of employing non-professional to teach the course, failure in the employment of relevant teaching methods and materials among other challenges.

Concept of Peace

Peace is all about cultivating attitudes and values that are germane to democratic culture of making people work together, share together, help one another by respecting the rights of others, obey the rule of law and promote social justice. It is a process that helps to eliminate prejudices, stereotypes and hatred among people of diverse nationality by encouraging harmonious coexistence (Ezeoba, 2012). It is conceptualized simply as an absence of war or, more precisely, as a temporary suspension of hostilities secured by military power (Funk, 2002.). According to Danesh (2006) in his "integrative theory of peace", peace is a psychological, social, political, ethical and spiritual state with expressions at intrapersonal, inter-group and international areas of human life. Ajala (2003) defines peace as stage of practicing all norms, values and attitudes that can bring about a conducive environment for human living. According Osemene (2012), peace means a political condition that ensures justice and social stability through formal and informal institutions, practices, and norms. A definition posited by Funk is said to be narrow in scope as it limited to only temporary suspension of hostilities secured by military power; despite peace can be secured through dialogue and other traditional ways.

Concept of Peaceful Co-Existence

Peaceful co-existence implies the capacity to live together in harmony. This calls for non-violent ways of resolving conflict. Adejobi and Adesina (2009), postulated that Peaceful co-existence begins with the individual and spreads to the family, school, community, nation, and to the global village. The members of a society need to be oriented toward peace rather than towards violence. At the same time, social, economic, and political systems have to be re-oriented to peace. Inclusively, the discipline of peaceful co-existence must shape our way of life. Educational institutions are vital for the effectiveness of peaceful co-existence. For this to happen, these institutions must ensure an effective implementation of certain curricula that are relatively relevant in the promotion of peaceful co-existence in the society like social studies curriculum.

Relevance of Social Studies Curriculum in Inculcating Social and Peaceful Co-Existence in Nigeria

It is very much imperative to use Social Studies as an existing school curriculum to re-awaken positive values and attitudes, national unity and religious tolerance among Nigerians which are considered as instruments for achieving social and peaceful co-existence. Burns (2011), asserts that at various times, the need arises for countries to seek solutions to pressing problems of national importance, and this has been the position of various countries in search of political stability, unity and national consciousness is education. This therefore necessitates a growing need to embrace a type of education that will inculcate in the learners the values of peace and unity in diversity, the understanding of uniqueness, religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence. And this is what social studies curriculum is craving for; where learners are been taught to acquire knowledge about people, races and various ethnic groups, positive values and attitudes in the country, knowing that these differences should not become a potential source of conflict but a tool for building unity and togetherness to achieve peaceful co-existence.

Another point that can be used to justify the relevance of social studies curriculum in promoting peaceful co-existence through educational institutions is that; the need for Social Studies education arises when a society determines that formal instruction is required to develop a common set of understandings, skills, attitudes, and actions about human relations among all members of the society. It is an essential tool in formal education used to build trust in the mist of suspicion and distrust, unity in diversity, tolerance in the face of growing intolerance as well as develop desirable social understanding and behavior with the view to solve individual and collective problems. Social studies is needed anywhere change is required. Okam (2002) is of the view that Social Studies in Nigeria is aimed at overcoming the ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural barriers that keep apart the various groups that constitute the Nigerian society, so that nation-building can be facilitated by the concerted efforts of those divergent peoples of the Nigerian polity. The increasing popularity of the idea of globalization makes Social Studies education an imperative manual for Nigerians in their bid to interact with the outside world. The teaching of Social Studies enables learners to think beyond their individual interest and beyond their ethnic and religious affiliations; thereby making learners to become more tolerant and respectful of other people's views and opinions which are in turn gave way to social and peaceful co-existence in the society.

Challenges Bedevilling Effective Implementation of Social Studies Curriculum for Social and Peaceful Co-Existence

The challenges to the realization of inculcating socially desirable ideals and philosophy of life that can lead to arrive at social and peaceful co-existence through social studies education as envisaged by the curriculum planners include the following:

1. over dependence and application of expository/presentation teaching methods: according to Ezeobe (2012), practical-oriented teaching methods that could bring about interaction between teachers and students, students themselves and their environment capable of eliciting the desired learning outcomes in the learner are ignored or relegated;

2. use of instructional materials and resources: one of the most critical challenges facing social studies teacher today is the use of instructional materials and resources. Most social studies teacher make use of chalkboard, pictures diagrams and so on in their lesson delivery but ignore audio and audio-visual materials and community resources which are critical to the learning and internalization of values and norms; and

3. another challenge facing the realization of achieving the goal of social studies education is the employment of non- professionals to teach social studies in the belief that since social studies is the amalgam of the social sciences, any social science expert could teach it (Uko & Okebe, 2012).

Conclusion

The paper after all possible effort in reviewing theories, facts, ideas and philosophies regarding the place of social studies curriculum in reviving social and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria; it was concluded that social studies curriculum can be used to promote social and peaceful co-existence in the mind of Nigerian citizens. However, there are certain challenges bedeviling the effective implementation of social studies curriculum raging from problem of teaching methods and strategies; inadequate use of instructional resources and materials as well as employment of non- professionals to teach social studies with the belief that since social studies is the amalgam of the social sciences, any social science expert can be used to teach it.

Recommendations

Based on the challenges identified; the paper recommended as follows:

1. innovative teaching methods and strategies should be employed by social studies teachers to ensure effective implementation of social studies curriculum;

2. social studies teachers should apply relevant, appropriate and adequate instructional materials and resources to include all audio and audio-visual materials and community resources which are critical to the learning and internalization of values and norms; and

3. real social studies professionals should be employed to teach the subject at all levels of educational institutions.

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