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Impact of Educators' Perception and their Attitude Towards Social Studies Programme Implementation on Sustainable Development

Peter Dania

*Dept. of Curriculum Studies,
Educational Management and Planning
University of Uyo, Uyo*

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ABSTRACT - The study investigates the impacts of educators' perception and their attitudes towards social studies programme implementation on sustainable development. To achieve this, two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A four-point likert type questionnaire was developed and validated for the study. The data obtained from respondents were quantified and subjected to Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. Findings showed that educators' attitudes towards social studies programme influence significantly their implementation of the programme. The following recommendations were made: There should be re-orientation of educators in social studies in the areas of definition, contents, aims and goals of social studies. There should be adequate implementation of the programme by making fund available for the training of social studies teachers, provision of instructional materials and aids. There should also be periodic revision of the programme to suit the contemporary needs of the society.

KEYWORDS: Attitude, perception, social studies, sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Social Studies being a new course of study in the Nigerian educational system is bedeviled with misconceptions and obliviousness of its nature and purpose. Many authors have defined it in various ways. The differences in

definition could be attributed to differences in perception about its nature and purpose. It may also be possible that the way educators perceive Social Studies and their attitude towards the subject would have a great impact on the way the subject programme is implemented.

Inyang-Abia and Esu (1987) give social studies a double look. They viewed social studies from both objective and subject matter conceptualization. Estran (1968) in Inyang-Abia and Esu (1987) viewed social studies as '... an attempt to achieve a synthesis of what is known about human relationship.'

The subject-matter conceptualization of social studies sees it as a subject-centred discipline. Social studies in this thought is focussed on cognitive orientedness, topics, subject themes, subject matter and concepts derived from the traditional disciplines which are piled-up and taught as social studies (Inyang-Abia and Esu, 1987).

The views of educators as simply stated above are adopted as the attitudes of educators, and thus form the theory that will guide this study. The concept "attitude" can broadly be defined as orientation towards or away from some objects, concepts and situations and readiness to respond in predetermined way to these objects, concepts and situations.

Erikson (1966) defines attitudes as reactive feeling generated through experience in the mind under "likes and dislikes." This is a person's disposition to some things, ideas, objects activity or discipline. Attitudes are a complex collection of predisposition to think, respond and behave in a certain way. Dania (1997) remarked that attitude influence individual's perceptions, expectations, beliefs, feelings and behaviour. Attitude therefore help in shaping all humanr esponses to the various events, objects, people and issues in the world. The foregoing suffice the claim that if educators have positive attitude towards social studies programme implementation, they would behave accordingly towards it, and thus, the objectives of social studies programme in Nigeria would be achieved. In so doing, sustainable development would be realised.

Perception can be seen as a bridge between the physical world, through the physiological field, and the cognitive world. That is why it is fittingly defined as a process by which we become aware of our sensations of the world about us and our (cognitive) interpretations of these sensations (Eyo, 2003). The awareness and interpretation which are central to perception, naturally lead to responses, actions, reactions or behaviours.

Whatever, man does require a reasonable level of knowledge. Knowledge according to Piaget and Inhelder (1969) is a kind of reality and

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intelligence derived from perception constitutes a special case of sensory-motor activity which pictures reality in a figurative aspects.

Hochberg (1978) opines that perception predicts and controls human behaviour including learning. Drawing inference from Hochberg's opinion, it becomes possible that the way social studies programme would be implemented in Nigeria with a view to achieving its goals would to a large extent dependent upon the educators perception of its nature and purpose to the all round development of man.

Edmund and George (1975) say that impression is formed from verbal behaviour and non-verbal sources of communication. This then means that impression that social studies leaves on the mind of people is determined to a large extent by means through which the contents of social studies is communicated. Our prior beliefs crucially influence the impressions we form. If we are predisposed to have positive impressions about something without prior preconception of that thing, we are bound to react favourably towards the things.

This in summary means that educators' impression of social studies programme can be determined by the acquired beliefs from the programme. In fact, once a positive impression about a programme is formed, the actions that follow its implementation will be consistent with the formed impressions.

The problems of social studies implementation in Nigeria have been the issues of attitude and perception that educators have about the subject. Many educators criticized that social studies lacks content specificity (Mezieobi, 1992). Madubuike (1985) in Mezieobi (1992) perceived that social studies teachers do not use instructional materials and appropriate methods in teaching the subject.

The perception and attitude of the subject traditionalists also constrain social studies programme implementation. This group of educators believed that social studies would out-rightly displace their traditional school subjects such as history, geography, government, economics and sociology. Therefore they mount serious pressure against social studies inclusion in the school curriculum at all levels. This is why Ezege (1988) explains the negative role of the traditional subject experts to frustrate social studies implementation. Enesua (1995) (in Inyang-Abia and Esu, 1987) lamented the discouraging tempo with which the trained social studies educators accept the social studies curriculum content. Educators in the field complain that the scope of social studies is too wide because of the integrated nature. Udofot (1986) holds that evidence from the study of curricula of some colleges of education shows that social studies is not in their programme of study. Therefore, the non-inclusion of social studies programme in most of the

country's universities and colleges of education's curricular tends to influence educators' attitude towards social studies statue as an essential subject in the country's educational system.

Onyabe (1990) (in Inyang-Abia & Esu, 1987) described social studies as a "bastard child" based on the confusion and contradictions inherent in the way educators perceives it.

Enesua (1995) in Dania (1997), revealed that students of social studies do not want to identify with the course because the essence of the course is not necessary since the study of man and his environment can be taught under civic, geography, sociology, economics and political science. This type of attitude of social studies undergraduates is reflected in the way they carry out their studies in the course.

Teachers also are not spared in the negative attitudes accorded Social Studies. Their attitudes to implementation of social studies programmes have been that of apathy. In general, attitude and perception of educators about the nature and purpose of social studies as a discipline have raised a variety of divergent opinions and approach in the task of implementing social studies programmes in Nigeria. Consequently, the meaningful contributions that the subject was expected to make towards development is greatly reduced.

Statement of Problem

There is a general confusion and contradiction over the nature and purpose of Social Studies education in Nigeria. Many educators see it as a duplication of traditional school subjects. Even social studies undergraduate do not see the essence of the subject in the school curriculum since the study of man and his environment could be done using other "better" courses. One is therefore tempted to think that the perception and attitudes of educators toward social studies influence its implementation. Again, would a positive perception of and attitude towards social studies by educators help in the realization of sustainable development in Nigeria?

Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions:

1. Does educators perception of social studies programme influence their level of implementation of the programme?
2. Are the attitudes of educators toward social studies responsible for the poor implementation of the programme?

Statement of Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were tested in this study.

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1. Educators' perception of social studies programme does not significantly influence their level of implementation of the programme.
2. Educators' attitude toward social studies programme does not significantly influence their level of implementation of the programme.

Scope and Design of the Study

The study is focused on educators' perception of and attitudes towards the implementation of social studies programme in eastern states of Nigeria.

Survey study design was used in carrying out the investigation.

Study Area

The study was conducted in the seven eastern states of Nigeria. These are Akwa Ibom, Imo, Abia, Rivers, Anambra, Enugu and Cross River States.

Population: The population of this study consisted of all educators in the twelve (12) institutions that offer social studies programme in the seven eastern states of Nigeria.

Sampling Procedure: Three (3) states out of the seven eastern states of Nigeria were selected for sampling. Within these States, there were five tertiary institutions that offer social studies and the five schools were selected.

Educators of social studies in the five schools were selected. The total number of educators were 125 which were used as sample for the study.

Instrumentation, Administration and Scoring

A four-point likert rating scale questionnaire labelled "The Educators' Attitudes/Perception Questionnaire on Social Studies (EAPQSS)" was used to obtain information. The twelve item EAPQSS was face validated using two educators and the reliability index of 0.87 was obtained.

The instrument was administered by the researcher to all educators in the schools. The respondents completed and returned the questionnaires on the spot. Numerical values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 were assigned to strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively.

Method of Data Analysis and Results

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse the data collected for the testing of the two hypotheses.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between perception and implementation (n = 125)

Variables	Σx Σy	Σx^2 Σy^2	Σxy	R_{xy}
Perception (x) Level of implementation (y)	5284 2491	226596 52571	105905	0.21

$P < 0.05$, $df = 123$, critical $r = 0.17$.

The obtained correlation (r) values was 0.21 while the critical value of was 0.17. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected since the obtained value was greater than the critical value at 0.05 level of significance and at degree of freedom (df), 123. Thus, there is a significant relationship between educators perception of and the implementation of social studies programmes.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Analysis of the relationship between attitudes and implementation (n = 125)

Variables	Σx Σy	Σx^2 Σy^2	Σxy	R_{xy}
Perception (x) Level of implementation (y)	2993 2491	72919 51571	60338	0.45

$P < 0.05$, $df = 123$, critical $r = 0.17$.

From table 2 above, the result showed the calculated r -value as 0.45 which was greater than the critical value of 0.17 given at 0.05 alpha level of significance with degree of freedom of 123. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that educators' attitudes towards social studies programme does significantly influence their implementation of the programme.

Discussion

The outcome of the finding from the analysis of hypothesis one lend support to Hochberg (1978) affirmation that perception predicts and controls human behaviour including learning. Consequently, the way educators' perceive social studies as relevant to the individual and society would significantly influence their behaviour towards the implementation of social studies programmes.

The perception of social studies educators is influenced by the orientation acquired of the programme. If given a right orientation of the

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programme, they will go on to implement the programme in accordance with the acquired orientation. Therefore, if the educators perceive social studies as a multidisciplinary course, they go on to implement it as a compartmentalised subject but if they perceive it as an integrated course of study, they go on to implement it so.

What is emphasized is that since perception bears direct influence on behaviour there is need to make social studies relevant in the school curriculum especially since it has been recognized as a core subject. In so doing, educators would develop positive perception about it and thus implement social studies programmes accordingly.

The finding that educators attitudes significantly influence the level of implementation of social studies is not surprising. In fact, a person's attitudes shapes his behaviour or actions and response to issues, events and situations. This finding corroborate the opinion of Edmund and George (1975) who argued that attitudes help in shaping all human responses to the various events, objects, people and issues in the world.

There is need to be concerned with how to make social studies products (educators) to develop positive attitudes towards the course. There is need to resolve the controversy over definition, nature and purpose of the subject. Moreover, social studies should be taught at the senior secondary school level. These are some major ways of reducing positive attitudes in the educators. Today, many people run away from the course because it is considered unnecessary as well as not being incorporate in the West African Examination Syllabus.

Conclusion

Educators' perception of social studies programme has a significant influence on their level of implementation of the programme. Perception being an impression had about an event, idea or object, the impression educators have of social studies will definitely influence how they go about implementing social studies programme. Educators' attitudes towards social studies programme have a significant influence on the implementation of social studies programme. The level of implementation of social studies programme has been influenced by the attitude they hold about the subject.

Recommendations and Implication for Sustainable Development

The following recommendations are made in the light of the findings from the study:

- (i) The setback in the implementation of social studies programme in Nigeria have associated impact on the quest for sustainable

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development. The subject content is reach in value and citizenship education. These benefits that would have been derived from the implementation is gradually eluded to solve poor attitude and perception of the subject arising from confusion over its nature and purpose in the school curriculum.

Against this backdrop, it is necessary that social studies educators be re-orientated about the nature and purpose of social studies.

- (ii) Educators need to understand that the goals of social studies are different from the goals of social studies derivatives. This should be emphasised.
- (iii) Social studies should be taught at all levels of the school system considering the 6-3-3-4 levels. Its absence at the senior secondary school level really impinges upon positive attitude on the parts of educators. It is believed that this would improve the status of us graduates since they would now have opportunity to teach the senior class students like their counterparts in other school subjects.

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