

Assessment of Teacher's Use of Action Oriented Techniques and Strategies for Teaching Social Studies in Lower Basic Education in Ogun State, Nigeria

¹Anderson Paingha Sele
& ²Amos Adekunle
Adediran

¹Niger Delta University,
Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State,
Nigeria

²Department of Social Studies,
Federal College of Education,
Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria

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Corresponding Author:

Anderson Paingha Sele

Abstract

The study sought to assess the teacher's use of action oriented techniques and strategies for teaching Social Studies in lower basic education in Ogun State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was employed for this study. Questionnaires were used to acquire necessary data for the research work. Simple random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) lower basic educational levels in Odeda Local Government, Ogun State, Nigeria. Twenty (20) teachers were randomly selected from each of the chosen school to make a total of two hundred (200) as sample for study. Two research questions were raised for the study. The data collected were analyzed with the use of simple percentage, mean and standard deviation statistical tools. The result revealed that, teaching is to elicit curiosity, interest, attention and scientific attitudes require the use of action-oriented techniques that help to bring about well-rounded learners and quality education. The use of such approaches will lead to learners making discoveries and inventions that will benefit them and society. It was therefore recommended that Social Studies teachers should be encouraged to use action-oriented methods through the provision of needed materials and resources and also, government and education managers should organize on-the-job training, seminars, workshops, symposia and conferences at intervals for Social Studies teachers to update their knowledge on action-oriented teaching-learning methods.

Background to the Study

The school in Nigeria, like in many other places, is a structured agent of socialization and nurturing of children and young adults into dependable individuals. Nigerian children are taught by teachers as they go to school to receive education in order to develop appropriate attitude; acquire knowledge, skills and abilities for meaningful living within the society. This can be achievable through educational activities that are learners centred for maximum development and self-fulfillment. We live in an era of advanced technologies, which consequently exposes the learner to objects requiring manipulation and activity, even from a very tender age as they play around with toys. Hence, a learning situation (e.g. teacher-centered, role learning and memorization method) in which the learner is forced to be a passive recipient of knowledge would rather turn out to be dull and boring. Most importantly, a learner who is denied the opportunity of being actively involved in the teaching/ learning processes would definitely not be able to acquire sufficient practical experiential competencies that would enable him to fit into the fast changing society and thereby not be able to acquire the necessary need skills for effective functioning in the society (Onwukwe, 2010).

Social Studies is a realistic subject that studies human beings in the real life situation. The salient fact derived from the study of Social Studies is the recognition of human being as the most important factor of learning, and development of purposeful skills and knowledge to enable them function well in the society. Social Studies as an integrated and multi-disciplinary subject was introduced into Nigerian school curriculum to help train and develop intelligent, responsible, self-directed and democratically minded citizens. Okoro (2005), emphasized the position of Social Studies in the school curriculum, as a way by which national consciousness, unity in diversity, national tolerance and respect for others are taught or implemented over decades. Hence, it is unclear whether these lofty objectives of Social Studies that help in entrenching societal peace are being inculcated in the younger ones, considering the current status-quo of high crime wave and other societal ills. This then proves that all is not well with the teaching and learning of Social Studies in the school systems (Adediran, 2017). The question now is what then could be the problem? Could it be that the methods used in the teaching and learning of Social Studies are not effective in inculcating the appropriate knowledge, attitude and skills to the learners or the teachers of Social Studies are not familiar with or trained to use activity/ action based teaching strategies which has been proven to be the most effective for the teaching of the Social Studies

The effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching-learning process is very much dependent on the teaching strategies, methods and skill. Dike (2002) in a study revealed that most teachers adopt expository method in teaching Social Studies concepts. Onwukwe (2010) and Abimbade (2007) confirmed that lecture method (expository) is predominantly used by teachers in teaching in Social Studies. This approach is often referred to as “talk and chalk method”, which is also known as teacher centered method. Mezieobi (2005), critically examined three major methods of teaching Social Studies. They are expository, problem solving and activity methods. All these methods have associated techniques that

distinguish one from the other. The expository method recognizes two participants – the speaker (teachers) and the audience. It is an old method of teaching in which organized thoughts, facts, information and knowledge are presented to the learners by the teacher. The problem solving method involves the teacher giving students problems with a view to finding solutions to the problems. It makes students think by means of solving problems and creating purposeful environments associated with discussion, simulation, field-trips, and dramatization among other strategies.

Iwuamadi (2013), emphasized on using appropriate method of teaching in order to foster learning. According to Mezieobi (2005), activity-based or action-oriented learning is the major method of teaching Social Studies. The major teaching strategies associated with activity methods are discussion, simulation, collaborative, field trips, project, debate, demonstration, dramatization, questioning and role-playing. These methods entail active and lively involvement and participation of Social Studies learners. Action-oriented / activity-based learning strategy appears to be getting greater acceptance as a method of teaching Social Studies. This might be as a result of reported advantages it offers such as providing the learners with an in-depth knowledge of subject matter content; it develops learners' interest and leads to discovery of new facts. Some of the activity-based strategies include; collaborative, cooperative, and problem-solving strategies.

Action-oriented methodology is an approach to teaching/learning processes in which the learner is the central focus and major determinant of the subject-matter and learning experiences to be provided; learner gets actively involved for at least 50% of the lesson period. In such situations, the teacher acts as a facilitator who may introduce the lesson for the day and then allows the learners to carry out the bulk of the work themselves (Mkpa, 2003). In this direction, Mezieobi (2004) suggested that the action-oriented methods could be carried out through a good number of techniques and methods including: (i) Discussion in small groups or whole class group (ii) Simulation (iii) Role play (iv) Dramatization (v) Field trip or excursion (vi) Mock trials (vii) Questioning (viii) Dalton plan (ix) Inquiry and (x) project methods. Each of the aforementioned qualifies for a technique in the action-oriented teaching method because they emphasize activity and involve the learner in one form of action or activity. A teacher who is well educated in the use of action-oriented methods will always find it convenient to use any of these methods/techniques at any particular point depending on the subject matter and the level he has in view.

Furthermore, action-oriented teaching is an approach to teaching which puts the human agency in the centre of attention. It is anchored in the socio-culturally mediated human capacity to act – focusing on what teachers and learners do and say while engaged in meaningful teaching and learning activities (Bernstein, 2000). Larsen – Freeman (2003), is of the view that learning is a non-linear process that emerges in unpredictable ways. It involves series of meaningful activities; which are indeed part of the dynamic system of classroom/educational activities. The “action oriented learning and teaching approach”

has its own specific connotation, which is closer to the “attribute” paradigm. It comprises technical, individual, methodological and social competences in a holistic understanding. Learners graduating from this approach are expected to have acquired not only skills and knowledge laid down in qualifications, unit standards and skeleton curricula, but also “key competencies” (Vygotsky, 2008), such as problem solving techniques, communication skills, ability for team work. Teachers often use action oriented approach in learning and teaching because the approach lets them cope with ever changing nature of society, and shall provide the basis for continuous life-long learning, be it formal, non-formal, or informal (Vygotsky, 2008).

Van Lier (2004), relates action based teaching to pedagogical scaffolding. To him, there must be six conditions that need to be met – continuity such as depicted in task repetitions, connections and vacations; contextual support as in enacting safe and supportive environments, inter-subjectivity as embedded in mutual engagements, and encouragements, contingency in task procedures, handover/take over, which increase roles for learner that also enable them to attend to emerging skills and knowledge and flow - when the skills and challenges fall into balance as participants get in tune with each other. All these can be summarized into three scales of micro, meso and macro scales. While moment to moment interactional work happen at the micro level, steps of particular activities or tasks are planned at the Meso level while chains of tasks, projects and so on are realizable at the Macro level. There is first an overall plan that stakes out a long time period of work. The teacher and the learner then aim to undertake and finish particular projects or achieve set goals within time frames. Teachers and learners identify and spell out stipulated times and still delve into interactional work that would lead to the overall achievement of all set goals in education.

This paper regards action based approaches as closely connected to such other approaches as task-based, project-based, exploratory experimental, computer-assisted learning among others. Much as all these may not be synonymous with one another, the action based approach absorbs and subordinates them. They all see the learner as an active person, not just a rote memoriser of facts or input receiver but one who also engages in constructing knowledge. The whole of the learners' hearts, bodies, senses and brains are involved. Bernstein (2000) insists that an individuals' experiencing of past, future and possible contents of the curricular which would enhance his growth is vital in the educational process. This situation calls for inclusion of the person, personally, socially, intellectually, culturally so as to enable such a one to operate within the milieu at individual, social or political levels to the benefit of self and society.

Action-oriented techniques conceive teaching as a joint venture between teachers and learners. They directly involve the learners with materials, objects and equipments to experiment, construct, observe, practice skills, and understand an abstract principle in greater depth in such a way that they take responsibility for their own learning. The use of action-oriented methodologies in the teaching and learning of Social Studies will enable the learners to acquire skills of information location data gathering and analysis, so as to

make inference and draw conclusions. They should also embark on projects, surveys, interviews, guided observations, inquiry, experiments and organized study trips that focus on problems in the society. When all these are done, quality assurance in education will be achieved by the learners that will lead to the educational development of a nation.

The adaptation of action-oriented methodologies in the teaching and learning of Social Studies will change the role of the teacher from being an authoritative source of information to that of being a guide initiator, adviser, director and motivator of learning activities. On the part of the learners they will get actively engaged in the instructional process interacting with one another and the environment. The result is that the learners will develop their potentialities, the spirit of perseverance, and work towards making the most rational decisions among competing alternatives. This being the case, quality assurance in education is achieved by the learners for the educational development of the country.

In the area of self-realization, the use of action-oriented methods in the teaching and learning of Social Studies give room for experiences that bring about personal growth. The learner develops the inquiring mind through a consideration of vital issues and problems involving man as he relates with his physical and social environment. Through this teaching approach, opportunities are provided for learners to develop, use and strengthen group work skills, intellectual skills, communication skills, study skills in dealing with the problems of concern to group life (Iwuamadi 2013). The use of these skills will help to meet individual needs thus helping the learners to improve their competencies in individual and group enterprises. Self-direction, co-operation, responsibility and similar other behaviours encouraged through the use of such teaching approaches, help the learners increase their personal effectiveness in living and working with others. The end product of this kind of education is preparation of the learners for life in society by being patriotic, self-reliant and productive, thereby achieving quality assurance in education.

Quality education can be achieved through the use of action-oriented methods in the teaching and learning of Social Studies thereby bringing about improved human relations. The use of action-oriented methods requires learners to work in groups to achieve a common purpose thus teaching interdependence among members and parts of the society. Respect of other views, courtesy, appreciation of home and family ideas, and community living are emphasized as the group approach is adopted in carrying out investigations. Democratic values and ways of working together characterize group processes in the use of action-oriented approaches. These experiences acquired in Social Studies instructional process are translated into practical living by learners to encourage warm human relationship, co-operative community living and national and political stability paving way for productivity in all facets of national life – hence quality assurance in education is assured.

Action-oriented teaching methods facilitate economic-efficiency in learners thereby bringing about quality assurance in education. This is because they provide experiences that build attitudes, understanding and skills essential for effective workmanship. Effective work habits, study skills and perseverance are emphasized in carrying out individual and group responsibilities. Attention is given through group planning on the requirements of various tasks, ways of achieving them and the role each individual would play in accomplishing responsibilities. In the use of this teaching methods, room is not created for anyone to be a passenger because each has been assigned task that must be accomplished and sometimes even defeated using certified data. Furthermore, the community becomes a living resource centre and laboratory for various kind of experimentation such that learners study various groups, appreciate the work of those in the community and contributions they make to productive living. As the learners grow and mature, they become familiar with problems, needs and aspirations of the community. They also develop the needed background information on the economic activities, problems of production, distribution and consumption so that they can become competent workers at home, community and nation (Michealis, 2004).

Social Studies education is for the production of an effective citizenry for the development and betterment of the nation. These entail citizens who are informed and can make reasoned and national decisions, willing to defend and even pay the supreme price. The use of action-oriented methodologies provides opportunities for learners to work as responsible members of groups to achieve group purposes and it is a basic fundamental aspect of growth in civic responsibilities. In addition, appreciating the opinion of others, upholding group standards, loyalty to democratic ideals, working to shape the behaviours of learners for adult role in society, will help to foster quality assurance in education in Nigeria. However, several obstacles exist within the school system that may pose threat in achieving these. They include: rigidity of the school timetable, inadequate facilities and resources, unprofessional altitude of some Social Studies teachers.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the teacher's use of action oriented techniques and strategies for teaching Social Studies education in lower basic education level in Ogun State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the extent at which teacher use action oriented techniques and strategies while teaching Social Studies
2. Examine the influence of the use of action oriented approach when teaching Social Studies

Research Questions

1. To what extent do teacher use action oriented techniques and strategies while teaching Social Studies?
2. What are the influences of the use of action oriented approach when teaching Social Studies?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises of all lower basic education level in Odeda Local Government, Ogun State, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) lower basic education levels in Odeda Local Government; Ogun State. Twenty (20) teachers were randomly selected from each of the chosen school to make a total of two hundred (200) as sample for study. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire contained items on the main title of study. The instrument was given to experts for construct and content validation. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage, mean and standard deviation statistical tools.

Presentation of Data Analysis, Results and Discussion of Findings

Research Question one: To what extent do teacher use action oriented techniques and strategies while teaching Social Studies?

Table 1.

S/N	ITEMS	YES		NO		Mean (\bar{x})	S.D
		Freq (N)	Percent %	Freq (N)	Percent %		
1.	Most teachers apply the action approach method while teaching.	182	91	18	9	3.85	.79
2.	Social studies is a wide subject, therefore most teachers find it difficult to use the approach	176	88	24	12	3.79	.78
3.	Most teachers do not apply the action approach while teaching	168	84	32	16	3.74	.78
Overall Total		Mean (\bar{x}) = 3.77 and STD = 0.78					

Findings from table 1 above show the extent do teacher use action oriented techniques and strategies while teaching Social Studies. This reveals that the mean and standard deviation of the items listed above is very high ($\bar{x} = 3.77$, $SD = 0.78$). This implies that the action approach strategies are often applied by lower basic teacher when teaching Social Studies. The result is in line with the findings of Vygotsky, (2008) says that teachers often use action oriented approach in learning and teaching because the approach lets them cope with ever changing nature of society, and shall provide the basis for continuous life-long learning, be it formal, non-formal, or informal.

Research Question Two: What is the influence of the use of action oriented approach when teaching Social Studies?

Table 2.

S/N	ITEMS	AVAILABLE		NOT AVAILABLE		Mean (\bar{x})	S.D
		Freq (N)	Percent %	Freq (N)	Percent %		
1.	The use of action-oriented methods give room for experiences that bring about personal growth in the learners	101	67.3	49	32.7	3.7	.77
2.	It helps learner to develop the inquiring mind through a consideration of vital issues.	107	71.3	43	28.7	3.9	.78
3.	It provided learners to develop, use and strengthen group work skills, intellectual skills, communication skills	99	58.5	51	32.3	3.4	.73
Overall Total		Mean (\bar{x}) = 3.56 and STD = 0.76					

Table 2 above shows the influences of the use of action oriented approach when teaching Social Studies. The table reveals that the mean and standard deviation of the items listed above is very high ($\bar{x} = 3.56$, $SD = 0.76$). This indicates that the use of action oriented approach influence the learning and teaching Social Studies. These findings agreed with the study of Iwuamadi (2013) who reports that, the use of action-oriented methods in the teaching and learning of Social Studies give room for experiences that bring about personal growth. The learner develops the inquiring mind through a consideration of vital issues and problems involving man as he relates with his physical and social environment. Through this teaching approach, opportunities are provided for learners to develop, use and strengthen group work skills, intellectual skills, communication skills, study skills in dealing with the problems of concern to group life.

Conclusion

Nigerian education system needs to produce students that can do" not just those that possess theoretical jargons. Hence, there is need for improvement in the quality of education vis-à-vis the teaching-learning processes. This then calls for the use of appropriate teaching-learning methods that is capable of producing patriotic, self-reliant and productive citizens. The use of action-oriented methodologies in teaching Social Studies education bring about the development of human resources as it helps learners to think and act critically and creatively, which would have set the stage for a stable and virile society. The use of such approaches will lead to learners making discoveries and inventions that will benefit them and society.

Recommendations

1. The core of teaching reform is the reform of teaching content. As the important carrier of teaching contents, curriculum status is very important. Hence, there is need to reform the curriculum in line with action-oriented teaching.
2. Social Studies teachers should be encouraged to use action-oriented methods through the provision of needed materials and resources.
3. Government and education managers should organize on-the-job training, seminars, workshops, symposia and conferences at intervals for Social Studies teachers to update their knowledge on action-oriented teaching-learning methods.
4. There is need to relax the school time-table to create room for learners to carry out investigations and experiments.
5. Teachers should also be prepared to teach the students social skills as some of them may have difficulty in relating to other students even when they have brilliant ideas to share.
6. Government should employ more qualified teachers to enhance the quality of teaching in schools.
7. Periodic high stake tests should be made to lose their strength and appeal in series of action-based work in the classroom.

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