

# The Required Teaching Methods: A Test of Teachers Competencies in Teaching Social Studies in Nigerian Secondary Schools

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## ABSTRACT

*This review is on choosing the required teaching methods: a test of teachers competencies in teaching Social Studies in Nigerian Secondary Schools. For effective and efficient impartation of the knowledge of Social Studies to its learners, the required methods have to be adopted by the teacher. Social Studies is interdisciplinary in nature and content. From the study, it was observed that we have general and conventional methods of teaching such as lecture method but some subjects require specific methods for their teaching to enhance the internalization of the objectives. This study stresses the importance of using discussion method, problem solving method and questioning method of teaching because of the interdisciplinary composition of social studies. The study reveals that when the above mentioned teaching methods are used for teaching social studies in the Nigerian Secondary schools, it will help students to understand social studies, and the objectives of its teaching much better.*

**Keywords:** *Social Studies, Teaching Methods, Teachers Competencies.*

## INTRODUCTION

Social Studies is an interdisciplinary subject in nature and content. It deals with man's interactions with his physical, social, economical, cultural, religious, scientific and technological environment (Osakwe and Itedjere, 2005). Consequently, its contents are derived principally from disciplines such as economics, geography, history, political science, sociology, anthropology and psychology. Therefore, teaching the subject effectively requires the services of competent Social Studies teachers. It is therefore important for Social Studies teachers to show competence in their teaching as well as in their teaching methods adopted. Mezieobi and Fubura (2005) have recommended specific methods of teaching Social Studies such as discussion method, problem solving method and questioning method. Teaching methods are discussed from the perception of pedagogy.

Pedagogy is the study of methods and types of teaching. For effective teaching to take place, a good teaching method should be adopted by Social Studies teachers. Social Studies teachers have many options when choosing a teaching method. However, several studies guide the teacher when deciding what teaching method to use. The teacher needs to consider the background knowledge, environment, entry point and learning objectives of the students. Again, teachers should take cognizance of the fact that students learn in different ways but almost all students respond well to praise as reward from the teacher. But students have different ways of understanding information and demonstrating their knowledge. It is on this note that competent teachers should be able to use methods of

teaching that will enable students to learn and retain information that will strengthen their understanding. The study of the methods of teaching of Social Studies in Nigerian schools remains an ongoing exercise because the nature and contents of Social Studies make it interactional. Therefore, the best method of teaching is the one that has positive influence on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of the students. However, what is common among the methods is that a variety of strategies are used to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to learn the subject in school. Therefore an attempt will be made to categorize the methods into three domains of learning and the categorization is carried out across other subjects. For instance, Ughamadu and Okoye (1998) examine teaching methods from the general perception. However, for the interest of this study, the methods of teaching is viewed from the specific dimension. That is a particular discipline recognizes a particular method that is adequate and relevant for the realization of the instructional objectives. It is in this direction that the works of Corbin (1981) and Akinlaye (2002) become useful. Their studies reveal (i) Discussion method, (ii) Problem-solving method, (iii) Dramatization method, and (iv) Questioning method are the specific methods of teaching Social Studies.

**Discussion Method:** Most studies have shown that discussion method is very important in Social Studies teaching and learning because of its nature of education. Naturally, Social Studies provide the ground for group discussion. Majority of the issues discussed consist of social issues and day-to-day happenings that affect both the teacher and the students alike. Bello (1980) describes discussion method of teaching as a verbal exchange of views, opinions or ideas between two or more people. This activity that the teacher gives the students a topic to discuss in the class is what takes place in discussion method. They carefully consider the topic, debate in a democratic manner, suggest solutions and draw conclusion. Some times, a short discussion among the students may take place as part of lesson in which another method is dominantly used. This may be an exercise or a form of reinforcement. Nevertheless, the use of this method in the teaching of Social Studies among secondary school teachers in Nigeria is imperative.

Ajaja (2009) supports the use of this method when he describes the method as an organized, pre-determined procedure of teaching Social Studies in the schools. In effect, the use of this method is taken as a pre-planned teaching experience. Thus, other studies indicate that there is the need for proper preparation before the use of this method for teaching. Callahan and Clark (1977) observe that in preparing to use the discussion method in teaching, the teacher has to first of all consider the topic to ensure that it has no clear-cut answer but can be viewed from various ways. The topic should be of the student's level and the type they are familiar with. This means that it should be within the ability of the students to discuss. The students should be informed some days before hand. This will enable them to think about the topic, collect points and make up their minds in regards to what they are to contribute toward the given topic. The relevance of using discussion method in teaching Social Studies topics help both the teacher and the students in understanding the topic. The use of this method provides consensus learning and encourages participatory learning. This is because when the method is used as revealed by Mezeiobi

(2008), participants put their ideas together and contribute meaningful ideas that can help to arrive at a conclusion on the topic. Some of the merits of using discussion method for teaching Social Studies are contained in the work of Ughamadu and Okoye (1998) as outlined:

- i It promotes inter-learning as both the teacher and students learn from one another;
- ii It reveals students potential since freedom of expression is encouraged;
- iii It provides students with a sense of confidence through frequent exchange of ideas;
- iv It helps students to develop power of imagination and expression; and
- v Students retention of facts learned is high.

Based on the advantages of discussion method of teaching, Social Studies experts believe that teachers should show competence in using the method in teaching especially in specific topics that require the application of the method. For instance the major food crops of Nigeria. Below is a subject matter and the use of the discussion method of teaching.

**Subject:** Social Studies  
**Topic:** The Major Food Crops of Nigeria  
**Class:** Mixed  
**School:** Abraka Grammar School, Abraka  
**Date:** 10-12-2012  
**Time:** 40 minutes  
**Average age of students:** 12+

**Instructional Objective:** At the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

- i List the major food crops of Nigeria,
- ii Locate correctly on the map of Nigeria their major areas of production;
- iii Enumerate their importance to man.

The above topic shown on a sample of lesson plan adopted from the work of Ezewa (1986).

**Problems Solving Method:** The nature of Social Studies encourages the use of problem-solving method in teaching the subject in primary and secondary schools. Devising problem solving method in teaching the contents have being well acclaimed by a number of scholars (Iseguan, 2004; Mezieobi, 2008 and Bello, 1980). However, opinions differ among these scholars in the description of the term. For instance, Iseguan (2004) describes the method from the point of view of approach rather than a method. In other words, he suggests that problem solving method is better understood in the light of approach in its teaching. According to his findings, the approach helps the students to find out solutions to problems by themselves. In contrast, Bello (1980) and Nacino-Brown et al (1985) are of the view that problem solving method is not the same as approach in its teaching. They maintained the description of the term to mean a teaching-learning process in which students work on their own in solving a problem. They do this by using the results of analyzed data to solve the problems in question. But the distinction between the teaching approach and teaching method is contained in the studies of Kpangban and Onwuegbu (1992) cited in Ughamadu

and Okoye (1995) that teaching approach is a very broad view of how teaching should be carried out taking into consideration particular principles of learning. The ideal teacher knows all about his children, how they grow, the dangers that surround them, their needs and capabilities as individuals. He knows the purpose of his efforts and care, and takes appropriate measures to see that his purpose is fulfilled. These variables help the teacher to appropriately define his/her approach to teaching in order to achieve positive result. The distinction is that while teaching approach covers several ideals which teaching should be carried out, teaching methods, incorporates a number of teaching techniques. Other studies explain problem solving method as a teaching-learning method in which students, either individually or in a group provide answers to problems with minimal guidance from the teacher. It embraces a continuous meaningful, well integrated activity beginning with a problematic situation. It then ends when the problem has been solved and a solution given. The study reveals that this process involves series of actions that constitute a unit of experience. It is on this background that the problem solving method is a teaching-learning process in which the students work on solving problems. They carry out this by using the results of some analyzed data.

In other to determine the competence of Social Studies teachers in Nigerian secondary schools, several studies suggested that the method should begin with the planning. That is, the teacher has to plan the use of the method. Ajaja (2009) notes that the teacher has to understand the process which includes planning the topic and idea that will be of interest to the student; determine how to organize the class in groups; consider available resources for the task; identifying and directing the students to initiate students reference materials. The knowledge of the approaches to teaching it is another important aspect that a competent teacher should know to be able to use the method adequately in the teaching exercise. The knowledge will also guide the teacher in the selection of the type of problem-solving approaches to be used in a given lesson. Callaham and Clark (1977) identify three types of approaches. These are: the guided approach; the modified approach; and the free approach. The three identified types of approaches according to Bello (1980) depend on the procedures to follow in its teaching. Therefore, for the Social Studies teacher to be able to use the method in teaching, he should familiarize himself with the procedures that are involved. The National Teachers' Institute Module I (1990) recommends two procedures that teachers should follow in problem-solving lesson. They are: inductive procedure and deductive procedure.

The purpose of inductive procedure according to *Longman Dictionary of Current English* (1995) is to enable the students to establish generalization from observed cases. While in deductive procedure guides the students to establish the rules. These rules are used to solve problems to prove the correct answers. There are doubts about the use of this method by Social Studies teachers at the secondary school level. Observations show that the use has not been mastered by majority of the teachers at this level. In addition, the method is not often being used especially by practicing teachers on teaching practice. It is on this basis that this study is investigating the usability of the problem solving method of teaching the students at the secondary school level.

**Questioning Method:** The peculiar nature of Social Studies requires the use of questioning method as rewarding in its teaching. However, Akinlaye (2002) cautions that the use of this method should be teachers' centred. As such, the teacher should understand the purpose of questioning method of teaching before using it. Furthermore, he opines that there are many positive prospects that questioning method of teaching serves. But before this teaching method is put into use, the teacher should have clear understanding about the purposes they serve. Questioning method is a process whereby sequence of appropriate questions is asked with the intention of leading the students to describe to a logical simplification. In this method, the teacher skillfully asks questions to the students so that they can see the limitations or inadequacies in a statement earlier made.

Other studies show the usefulness of this method in the teaching of Social Studies lessons in the school system. They explain the superiority of this method to all other methods of teaching used in teaching the students. In addition, some of the studies maintained that no Social Studies teaching method isolates itself completely from the use of questions to facilitates comprehension, clear doubts, clarify values, evaluate performance, stimulate creativity, and motivate learners to obtain relevant data appropriate for problem solving. In order to achieve the purpose of using this method in teaching, the patterns of how questions are asked to challenge opinions or solutions to enhance knowledge on issues are explained. Among the studies, four types of questions have been identified. They are broadly categorized into lower order questions and higher order questions. Some of these include Bloom's model (1956) and the socio-scientific model (Zevin, 1992). They agree that there are only two categories of the questioning methods but are broken down into four types for simplification purposes during teaching and learning process. They are: the factual or lower order type; the complex or higher order type; the probing type; and the divergent or creative type of questioning.

### **Effective Use of Questioning Method of Teaching Social Studies**

The use of questioning method at the Junior Secondary School level for teaching requires techniques for its effectiveness. This is because teachers should follow some basic guidelines for effective questioning in Social Studies class. In the opinion of Zevin (1992), teachers should ask affective questions. This type of questioning deals with feelings, beliefs, morals, and commitments to action. Affective questions help in eliciting, examining, determining data before decisions based on personal preferences and moral values are taken. Other guidelines are contained in the study of Joof (1999), Kupolati (1989), Hare and Pullian (1986). The questioning should be in this order: brief, clear and unambiguous questions. Questions should be tailored to the age, level, interests, experience and ability of the students; keep the students at alert, ready to answer questions to the whole class or group; and motivate students to ask questions and participate actively in the interactive process. Based on these facts, questioning method requires the competence of the teacher during teaching and learning process in the school.

## CONCLUSION

This study reviews choosing the required teaching methods: a test of the competencies for the teaching of social studies in Nigerian secondary schools. Social Studies is interdisciplinary in nature and content. It therefore requires the services of competent social studies teachers as well as specific methods such as discussion method; problem solving method and questioning methods of teaching. The study evaluated each of the teaching methods and concluded that when any of the specified methods cited in this work among other related methods of teaching social studies, are effective and efficiently employed in teaching the course, the aim and objectives of teaching Social Studies in Nigerian secondary schools will be achieved.

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