



ASSESSING UNDERGRADUATES' LEVEL OF GLOBAL ISSUE KNOWLEDGE AS PATHWAY TO BUILDING FUTURE SOCIAL STUDIES

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Abstract

There is no gain saying the fact that the interconnectivity characterizing the whole world as a result of revolution in the information communication technology which has turned the world into a global village is not without its concomitant effects manifesting in a number of challenges and issues that are of concern to all and sundry the world over, hence, the presence of global issues transcending national boundaries. Such challenges also defile being handled single-handedly by a particular nation or individual, hence, global efforts which calls for global citizens capable of contributing significantly in finding recourse to the said global challenges. Social Studies as a school subject known for accommodating emerging issues cannot but take its rightful position in this respect, hence, production of learners that are global in thinking, attitude and actions. This study thus assessed the proclivity of undergraduates' knowledge of global issues in building the future Social Studies. Qualitative approach involving triangulation of instruments such as Key Informant (KI), Participant Observer (PO) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were employed while a total of 160 participants drawn from two colleges of education in Oyo and Osun states on whom two FGD sessions were conducted constitute the study sample with data collected analyzed through content analysis, coded description, among others. Participants displayed fair knowledge of global issues while convergent and divergent views were expressed on the contributions of global issue knowledge to Social Studies undergraduates' productivity. It was recommended among others that peculiarities of Social Studies distinguishing it from other school subjects should be vigorously pursued; efforts should be geared towards equipping learners with adequate knowledge of global issues with cautions on the negative sides of such exposure; Social Studies image be promoted at home to garner right placement in the affairs of things in the nation's education scheme.

Keywords: Social Studies, Global issue knowledge, Future Social Studies

Introduction

The assertion, 'a good book needs no preface and a good product needs no advertisement' is a truism when it comes to discourse on Social Studies. This notion might not be unconnected with the situation of the Nigerian nation and the global community presently. The fact that the whole world today suffers one challenges or the other is obvious. However, the good news is that just as Rowstow in his stages of development identified, nations, the world over moves from one stage of development to other improved stages till the best is achieved. The place of

Social Studies in the annals of development and serving as source of solution to varied dimensions of challenges that the so-called developed world has evolved cannot be over-emphasized.

It is therefore paradoxical, the usual description of Social Studies even by experts as a 'new school subject' when in actual fact the subject has come a long way as a problem-solving subject, though evolved through a number of stages to its current preeminence status in the comity of other school subjects. This is barring all odds that the subject is



subjected to in Nigeria. For instance, despite the clamour for upgrading of the subject to the status of being offered at Senior Secondary (Upper Basic) levels, it was substituted by Civic Education. The good news again is that it was expressly stated in the nation's education curriculum that the subject is to be handled by Social Studies experts. Similarly, the subject is currently being grouped and taught as a theme under the aegis of 'Religion and National Values' at the Junior Secondary (Middle Basic) levels as against its initial ranking of one of the four core subjects in the nation's Universal Basic Education (Federal Government of Nigeria, FGN 2013; Universal Basic Education 2008).

In the light of the foregoing, the subject, Social Studies cannot afford to be relegated to the background considering its developmental epoch from its inception to the present dispensation. The corollary of which is the need for the subject to be attuned with the current global best practices to be more relevant both at national and global levels. Doing this calls for global compliance of Social Studies products, human and materials resources. Hence, building the future Social Studies that is capable of standing tall among other school subjects.

There is therefore the need for the 'particularization of the globalism and globalization of the particularism' (Ajiboye, 2005) when it comes to Social Studies graduates. Buttressing this, Ajere and Olorunmota (2015) affirmed that the review of the National Policy on Education (NPE) is to take cognizance the evolving events in the Nigerian society and the global world to make it relevant to global requirements and to address most of the naughty issues affecting the development of the society.

At this juncture, it is instructive to reiterate that the peculiarities of Social Studies as a school; subject has put the subject in the frontage of finding recourse to issues germane to the welfare of human beings and development efforts both at national and global levels (Ajitoni, 2008; Ogundare, 2010). The subject's ability to accommodate emerging issues more than any other school subjects cannot be over-emphasized (Ajiboye, 2011; Oladiti, 2015). Thus, through effective teaching and learning of Social Studies, global education as well as global citizens is being groomed to be able to contribute their quotas

to the evolving environment, the society and the world at large. Based on the foretasted premises, this study therefore assessed Social Studies undergraduates' level of awareness of global issue as pathway to building future Social Studies.

Problem Statement

Social studies as a problem-solving school subject has come a long way in finding recourse to a number of emerging issues and challenges confronting human beings and the environment both at national and global levels. This, the subject has achieved through its distinct peculiarities such as nature, scope, content, objectives, approaches, methodology and resource utilization among others that places it in the fore front in the comity of other school subjects.

Despite the indelible successes being recorded by the subject especially at the global level, the subject is yet to be accorded the rightful position in Nigeria. It thus becomes imperative for the subject to beef up resources at its disposal in becoming more locally and globally acceptable through production of graduates with adequate knowledge of their immediate environment and the world around, hence, knowledge of global issues. Attaining such feat requires effective; use of new media technologies that has made the whole world a global village.

Research Questions

- (i) What is the level of awareness of global issue knowledge of Social Studies undergraduates in the study areas?
- (ii) Of what need is global issue knowledge for Social Studies undergraduates?

Literature Review

The fact that the whole world has become a global village has added to the imperativeness of Social Studies to strive to be more relevant and embrace more global best practices in its teaching learning programmes. Spelling out the *raison d'être* of Social Studies as a school subject, the Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) in its announcement of her 27th National Annual Conference held in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 2011 averred that the core purpose of the subject is to help students develop the knowledge, skills and values that will enable them become effective citizens which calls for



the need to embrace innovative instructional and evaluative strategies capable of repositioning the subject in line with global challenges.

Obviously, attaining such feat cannot be done without necessarily launch the learners in the pedestrian of global issues. More so, it is one of the cardinal objectives of Social Studies to train learners' mind in the knowledge of their immediate environment as well as the knowledge of the world around. Simply put, global issues constitute those prevalent issues in virtually all areas of human endeavours as global citizens. Such issues do affect to a large extent, the economy, environment, human capabilities, decision making process that has to do with cooperation at global level such as global governance.

It is a phenomenon being driven by the forces of globalization such as from migration issues to fair trade to debt relief issues. Thus, global issues go beyond what a single nation can handle. For instance, issues such as climate change, avian flu, financial instability, terrorism, waves of migrants and refugees, water scarcity, disappearing fisheries, stark and seemingly intractable poverty are but global issues. It is instructive to state that such issues requires solutions imbued in cooperation among nations for the fact that each issue are connected at first as little to the next with the problems coming in all shapes and directions (Lomborg in Bhargava, 2018).

Buttressing the insurmountable nature of global issue by a single nation, certain common issues have been put forward. Each issue do affects a large number of people on different sides of national boundaries; each issue is one of significance concern directly or indirectly to all or most countries of the world, often as evidence by a major United Nation's declaration or the holding of a global conference on such issue. Each issue according to Alatis (2018) has implications requiring global regulatory approach, hence, no one government has the power or the authority to impose a solution while market forces alone is not capable of solving the problem.

The corollary of the foregoing is the imperativeness of global issue knowledge by Social studies undergraduates. This may not be unconnected with the fact that global literacy encompasses reasonable

familiarity with a number of global issues that keeps on dominating the news as well as a working knowledge of the basic terminology and fundamental concepts of such issues, hence, knowing enough about some global issues to create room for intelligent analysis of other issues (American Forum for Global Education in Alatis, 2018).

Subscribing on the same issue, Ogundare (2010) adduced that apart from taking into consideration current societal needs within the educational system at the levels of basic education is the incorporation into the curriculum of Social Studies many of the contemporary issues of local and global concerns such as youth restiveness, Family Life Education, HIV/AIDS preventive education ... globalization and Millennium Development Goals.

Contending the essence of global issue knowledge by learners, Bliss in Oladiti (2015) submitted that it is required of individual as a member of an interdependent global community to acquire relevant global knowledge, skills and values necessary for effective participation in shaping a peaceful, equitable, socially just and ecologically sustainable world. The more reason why Bhargava (2018) affirmed that global issues are our issues, because the issues are global, the consequences of action, inaction or inadequate action on such issues will by definition be felt globally, not just somewhere on the other side of the world but here where we live. If that is not sufficient reason to care about these issues and to use our newly found interconnectedness to join with others and do something about them, then what in the world is? This is where the issue of information communication technology (ICT) and the use of social media become pertinent for engaging learners and expose them to global community the more.

Little wonder, Bell-Rose and Debai in Alatis (2018) concluded that students in this age are expected to gain new kind of knowledge, skills and dispositions for them to function successfully in an increasingly interconnected global society. In apt corroboration of this assertion, Global and Social Studies Education (2014) advanced that unlike any other generation, the world needs citizens that know about the rest of the world, its issues and people, the nation and its people continue to face a host of opportunities and challenges as it relates to the rapidly accelerating



pace of globalization. An affirmation of the foregoing is the assertion of Maguth (2014) that through rapid development in commerce, transportation and communication, people once separated by space, language and politics are now interwoven into a complex global community.

Enlisting some sample list of Social Studies concepts, Council for Social Studies Education Advisory Board (2015) identified aside Government, Economics, History and Geography related concepts, some Global connections to include system, interdependence, human rights, international law, global economy, alliance, cooperation, communication, complexity, crisis, invasion, genocide, terrorism, peace and climate change.

These are transnational and transborder issues that cannot be single-handedly handle by a nation but global efforts. From all indications, the state of the world presently as a global community through increasing ICT and its appendages coupled with level of interdependence as well as the happenings around the world and its multiplier effects in terms of global issues is a clarion call for global competence driven by global citizens. This is the hallmark of building future Social Studies.

Methodology

This study employed qualitative approach to data gathering through triangulation of instruments such as Key Informant (KI), Participant Observer (PO) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) among 160 undergraduates stratified into 40 Social Studies undergraduates each in 200 and 300 levels of Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo and Osun State College of Education, Ila Orangun, Osun State. Two FGD sessions each were conducted with the participants in the study areas. Data collected were presented and analyzed qualitatively through content analysis, coded description, among others.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of global issue knowledge of Social Studies undergraduates in the study areas?

Content analysis of the participants' views indicated that most of the participants are aware of some global issues through some Social Studies courses they offered having to do with emerging and global

issues such as world politics, economic related issues, employment, migration, terrorism and security threats, human trafficking, environmental hazards, among others. Some claimed to be aware of some of the said issues through surfing internet, mass media activities, sporting events and Social Studies resources while some claimed to access such while looking for materials to augment lectures and in the cause of carrying out group and individual assignments. Thus, participants displayed fair knowledge of emerging and global issues that tend to make them global citizens. Findings here buttressed the contentions of some previous studies that agitated for imperativeness of global citizens (Ogundare, 2010; Ajere and Olorunmota, 2015; Bliss in Oladiti 2015; Bhagarva, 2018).

Research Question 2: Of what need is global issue knowledge for Social Studies undergraduates?

Excerpts from the FGD sessions held with the participants revealed both convergent and divergent views on the contributions of global issue knowledge to Social Studies undergraduates' productivity. While some were of the opinion that their exposure to global issues has made them to be conversant with the happenings outside their locality; explore opportunities in other parts of the world as it relates to academic and career progression; experience of coping strategies with some emerging issues and social problems; develop right attitude to some international issues; develop spirit of cooperation and relationships; more exposure and enlightenment to the world around; among others.

However, some participants expressed their reservations for the negative impact of their exposures to global issues such as terrorism; arm conflicts; bastardization of culture in the name of globalization and modernization; increased tendency for immorality; violence; increase crime wave; among others. Some previous studies are corroborated by this finding that emphasized the need for knowledge of global issues for global citizens (Global and Social Studies Education, 2014; Bliss in Oladiti, 2015; Alatis, 2018; Bell-Rose & Debai in Alatis, 2018; Bhagarva, 2018).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study premieres the imperativeness of Social Studies as a school subject to beef up efforts at



becoming more globally relevant in order to produce learners who will be global citizens capable of addressing global issues and challenges of this period. Doing this is expected to build the future of the subject so as not to be relegated to the background in the comity of other school subjects. From all indications, global issues transcends what can be handled by a single nation, hence, it requires collective efforts of the nations of the world. To be able to be part of the epoch therefore calls for learners that are global in thinking and actions. The implication of this for Social Studies education is enormous.

Thus, the peculiarities of the subject that distinguish it from other school subjects should be vigorously pursued while efforts need be made to ensure that learners are equipped with adequate knowledge of global issues with cautions on the negative sides of such exposure. The image of the subject should also be promoted at home to garner right placement in the affairs of things in the nation's education activities. When these measures are put in place, the future and prospect of the subject remain bright.

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