

Gender Issues in the Implementation of Social Studies Curriculum in Nigerian Universities

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The study investigated gender issues in the implementation of social studies curriculum in Nigerian universities. The subjects for the study comprised of all the 200 final-year sandwich social studies students of University of Port-Harcourt in the 2009 contact session. Five research questions guided the study. Researchers developed questionnaire containing 32 items and demographic information on students and lecturers were used to collect data. Frequencies and percentages were used to answer the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that there is a gender balance than gap in the implementation of social studies curriculum, more females offered social studies than their males counter parts, also there are more males than females academics teaching social studies. Finally, the study showed ways through which the social studies curriculum can be further improved for gender equity. Recommendations are made based on the findings.

Keywords: social studies, psychology, sociology of education

Introduction

Gender sensitivity about school curriculum offering is gaining global attention and concern because of the growing interest in equalizing access to education for the child irrespective of differences in sex structure. This is more apt when modern states with the accompanying drive for installation of credible democracies clamour for integration of human rights practices, values, skills, knowledge, and social justice principles into functional school curricula for the balanced development of human persons for effective appreciation of the need for gender equality in the pursuit of life-time opportunities and challenges.

Gender-balanced social studies curriculum ensures that content of instruction is unbiased and nondiscriminatory to both sexes. The essence is to create a fair school curriculum which offers commensurate situations and learning experiences for the realization of the needs, aspirations, and human rights of both sexes. Gender-balanced social studies curriculum in Nigerian universities is paramount in achieving international education standards and quality, which opens conducive learning opportunities and situations for the learners to sharpen and develop their intellectual and creative potentials on meaningful national and global issues.

Nworgu (2005) observed that the prevalent gender imbalance imperative in social relations in our society has drifted into the school system, resulting in gender gap in science, technology, and mathematics. Social studies education is focused on social issues for qualitative social living and transformation of the society.

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Issues and learning experiences organized for the liberation, civilization, and development of human persons should not be sexually segregated or limited in opportunities for academic growth because of social studies curriculum configuration or its implementation strategies.

Social studies education given its dynamic curriculum is apt for promoting millennium development goals (Mezieobi & Eze, 2009). One of the cardinal aims of the millennium development goals is to ensure high attainment of gender equity in education pursuit and limit drastically barriers to girl child education. The girl child needs to be given endless possibilities to explore her potentials, needs, interests, and aspirations in relative measures to the male counter parts in the university education system. While Nwaubani and Ezegbe (2008) were of the opinion that effective implementation of the social studies curriculum of the universal basic educational level helps in achieving the objectives of social studies curriculum as well as respecting the rights of the learner in actualizing access to education. Gleaned from the above postulation is that gender-balanced social studies curriculum in Nigerian universities presents functional gender nondiscriminatory curriculum for the development of the potentials of students to act as effective manpower for the inculcation of relevant values, skills, knowledge, and worthwhile attitudes.

Meaningful social studies instruction is geared at promoting gender equality which enhances full participation of women and men in resolving societal problems and preferring of sustainable solutions. A gender-balanced social studies curriculum is a situation where both sexes have equity and access in the teaching classroom process. Put simply, there is gender equity consideration in the formulation of social studies curriculum in terms of contents, learning experiences, and evaluation of learning outcomes. Gender-balanced social studies curriculum is functional in a technological-driven society and the current global concern to narrow gender gap and discrepancies in school curricula and human interactions involving males and females.

In Nigeria, the girl child in the last four decades or so ago, was generally not entitled to formal education (Ikekonwu, 2009, p. 23). A gender biased social studies curriculum is one in which learning situation, experiences, or content of instruction is organized in preference of favouring of one sex over the other in learning of tasks, comprehension, and involvement of the learner in the classroom teaching-learning interactive process. Ideally, in order to ensure that female students are given their rightful place in scientific (social studies) programme and activities, entire field of education should be gender sensitive (Nworgu, 2005), meaning that both sexes should be given equal opportunities and consideration for participation in classroom instruction. Furthermore, Nworgu (2005) condemned teachers who exhibit gender biased classroom practices. For instance, she classed for nonuse of sexist language or the avoidance of masculine gender in class activities.

Canter and Aanter (1991) upheld that parental views on gender roles and belief system bear a critical influence on the child's career. Put clearly, role differentiation in the society may create gender gap in education pursuits of male and female students. While Offorma (2004) and Eren (2005) posited that personal interest and commitment are driving force towards career pursuits. Mkpa (1999) and Nworgu (2004) found that females constitute a smaller proportion of students who offer science, technology, and mathematics. The situation is such that science, mathematics, and technology are perceived as masculine disciplines. In the same vein, Williams (1987, as cited in Ikekonwu, 2009) established that women are not energetic in offering science but prefer feminine disciplines as liberal arts, education, and so on.

Statistical information of Nigerian universities from National Universities Commission (1997), on gender enrolment from 1988/1989 to 1992/1993 sessions in Ojaleye (2001) showed that 72% males registered during this period, while female was 28%, this under representation was adjudged to be more pronounced in science

education (Nworgu, 2005). Illiya (1999) in her study established that there are substantial proportions of female teachers in nursery, primary, and secondary schools than tertiary institutions. Ikekonwu (2009) further asserted that after a decade, there is glaring gender disparity in the number and ranks of academic staff in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. A situation indicates more numbers of male academics than the female counterparts.

For effective implementation of social curriculum with a view to achieving educational values that are gender sensitive, Mezieobi (2007, p. 132) suggested that, "Social studies education lecturers in Nigerian universities need to be repositioned qualitatively in terms of professional growth in this millennium through retraining, research, seminars, conferences, and workshops". Steinert and Snell (1999) opined that interactive lecturing heightens participation of the learner as well as creates situations for reflective thinking and emotional satisfaction. Students participate effectively in learning when there is no gender gap in classroom instruction and if teachers' implementation strategies are gender sensitive and no sex group is favoured or isolated.

Furthermore, gender equity in the implementation of social studies curriculum would be greatly attained if: lecturers encourage equal participation of male and female students in classroom activities as in inquiry process, observation, measurement, interpretation of data amongst others, application of cooperative learning activities in which male and female students are shared into mix-up group, equal attention to male and female students in terms of response to questions, discussions and rewards, creating patterns for equal relationship among male and female students, and nonuse of sexist language and role model as examples should reflect male and female (Nworgu, 2005). Gender insensitive social studies curriculum which promotes gender gap is not functional in the modern age. It would be commonly perceived that integrated social curriculum in Nigeria, which structurally blends knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes for functional citizenry development would be dysfunctional if it does not promote gender equality as its core instructional objective in Nigerian universities.

What against the background for functional social studies curriculum implementation is gender sensitive and societal relevant in Nigeria, Igwe (2000) accepted that a transforming (social studies) curriculum is the one that is functional and flexible in terms of application of (new frontiers) in knowledge building. In the same vein, Nwabuisi (2008) upheld that a functional social studies education is the one that adapts to changes suitable to current societal values, needs, and aspirations.

Statement of the Problem

In African societies and Nigeria specifically, there has been gender disparity in social roles between the male and female child. Gender imbalance is acclaimed to affect the nature of curriculum implementation at all levels of the education system in Nigeria. This study therefore is determined to examine the extent gender gap that has influenced the implementation of social studies curriculum in Nigerian universities.

Research Questions

Five relevant research questions guided the study:

- (1) To what extent is the social studies curriculum gender-balanced?
- (2) To what extent is the social studies curriculum gender-biased?
- (3) What is the gender composition of students offering social studies?
- (4) To what extent is the appointment of social studies lecturers influenced by gender consideration?
- (5) How can the aspects of social studies biased curriculum be improved?

Method

Research Design

The design of the study is a survey which examined the extent of gender equality and imbalanced reflection in the implementation of social studies curriculum in Nigerian universities. Survey research is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items are considered to be representative of the entire group (Nworgu, 2006). This design is appropriate because it will seek the representative views of students on gender influences on the implementation of social studies.

Area of Study

The study on crucial gender issues in the implementation of social studies curriculum in Nigerian universities was conducted in University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and University of Port-Harcourt, Nigeria. This represents 12 out of the seven universities offering social studies at undergraduate levels in the south-south and south-eastern geographical zones of Nigeria (Source: Field work).

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all final-year sandwich degree social studies students in University of Nigeria and University of Port-Harcourt for the 2009 sandwich contact session. Fifty sandwich students of UNN (University of Nigeria, Nsukka) made up of 16 males and 34 females were used for the study, including 150 students of Uniport made up of 90 females and 60 males, altogether 200 first-degree sandwich students were used for the study. The choice of final-year students was informed by the fact that they are expected to have completed the social studies curriculum considerably to make valid inference.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

No sampling was done because the small size of respondents was manageable and constituted a homogeneous social unit.

Instrument for Data Collection

The basic data collection instrument used for the study is the researchers designed questionnaire titled "GISSC (gender in the implementation of social studies curriculum) and demographic data qualities of students and lecturers of the institutions used for the study". The researcher constructed a 32-item questionnaire in order for students to appraise their social studies teachers' instructional performance based on laid-down items on the rating questionnaire. The questionnaire items are to be rated on a modified 4-point Likert scale of "SA (Strongly agree)", "A (Agree)", "D (Disagree)", and "AD (Strongly disagree)".

Validation of the Research Instrument

The face validity of the instrument was determined by giving the draft to two experts in the field of social studies and two in measurement and evaluation in the respective universities used for the study. Their observation and corrections helped in strengthening the instrument for appropriate measurement of what it is supposed to measure.

Reliability of the Research Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was established through a *t*-retest method. The reliability of the instrument was determined in a preliminary survey of the instrument in University of Jos where 20 students

were used. After two weeks interval, the same respondents were retested with the same instrument, the result of the pilot study showed that the items on the questionnaire could be understood and easily rated by the respondents. With the application of Pearson product moment correlation, the result showed a reliability co-efficient correlation of 0.72, which was considered adequate for the study.

Admission of Instrument

The researchers personally administered the research instrument and gathered demographic information from the heads of departments of the institutions used for the study. This method helped in fast retrieval of duly filled questionnaire and demographic information, questionnaires out of 200 respondents were discarded because of ambiguities.

Method of Data Analysis

Frequencies and percentages were used for answering the research re-questions and demographic information. "SA" and "A" are positive responses, while "D" and "SD" are negative responses, which guided the interpretation of generated data.

Results

Analytical observation from the generated data showed that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10 are positive, while item 9 is negative in the sense that social studies curriculum offered in Nigerian universities is not gender insensitive. Based on the findings of the study as reflected in Table 1, the conclusion is that social studies curriculum offered in Nigerian universities is gender-balanced.

Table 1

To Which Extent Is Social Studies Curriculum Gender-Balanced

S/No.	Item description	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	It ensures a fair promotion of the skills of both genders.	97 (52%)	73 (40%)	8 (4%)	8 (4%)	100%
2	Gender equality and empowerment is encouraged.	100 (53%)	70 (37%)	18 (10%)	-	100%
3	It creates opportunity for similar learning situation.	147 (78%)	33 (20.5%)	1 (1%)	1 (0.5%)	100%
4	It is functional curriculum for social living.	80 (43%)	108 (57%)	-	-	100%
5	It is a process of democratizing learning experiences.	81 (43%)	78 (41%)	7 (9%)	12 (7%)	100%
6	It promotes healthy social interaction in the class room.	54 (29%)	100 (53%)	18 (10%)	16 (8%)	100%
7	It encourages cooperative learning amongst students of both sexes.	50 (27%)	88 (47%)	33 (17%)	17 (9%)	100%
8	Cultural roles of both genders are integrated in the social studies curriculum.	60 (32%)	80 (42%)	30 (16%)	18 (10%)	100%
9	Societal issues reflected are gender insensitive.	3 (2%)	21 (11%)	64 (34%)	100 (53%)	100%
10	Gender balanced curriculum as the contemporary focus of millennium development goals is projected by the present nature of social studies curriculum in Nigerian universities.	20 (11%)	120 (64%)	30 (16%)	18 (9%)	100%

Information from generated data on items 11, 12, 15, 16, and 18 indicated that social studies curriculum of Nigeria's universities is not gender-biased. Items 13, 14, and 17 revealed that there are social studies concepts that are gender-biased, teachers adequately used masculine concepts in classroom instruction and are not substantially equipped in teaching sexuality education, however, on the average the logical inference from the

study is that social studies curriculum implementation is not gender-biased (see Table 2).

Table 2

To Which Extent Is Nigeria's Universities' Social Studies Curriculum Gender-Biased

S/No.	Item description	SA	A	D	SD	Total
11	Social studies curriculum is gender biased.	4 (2%)	30 (16%)	55 (29%)	99 (53%)	100%
12	The content of instruction is focused mainly on male gender.	-	8 (4%)	80 (43%)	100 (53%)	100%
13	There are social studies concepts that are gender-biased.	130 (69%)	48 (26%)	7 (4%)	3 (1%)	100%
14	Teachers adequately use masculine concepts.	135 (72%)	45 (24%)	8 (4%)	-	100%
15	Teaching method is favorable to male gender.	-	-	100 (53%)	88 (47%)	100%
16	Evaluation strategies are favorable to both genders.	188 (100%)	-	-	-	100%
17	Social studies education curriculum is substantially equipped for teaching sexuality education.	32 (17%)	30 (16%)	30 (16%)	66 (35%)	100%
18	Better learning opportunities are provided for the male students above the female counterparts.	-	-	-	48 (26%)	100%

Table 3

The Demographic Data of Students Offering Social Studies

S/No.	University	N	Male	Female
1	UNN	50	16 (32%)	34 (68%)
2	University of Port-Harcourt	150	60 (40%)	90 (60%)
3	Total	200	76 (38%)	124 (62%)

Note. Source: Field work.

Demographic data of final-year sandwich students offering social studies in the 2009 sandwich Contact session showed that at the UNN, 32% of the students are male and 68% are female. At the University of Port Harcourt, 40% of the students are male and 60% are female, on the average, 38% are male while 62% are female. The result showed that more females offer social studies than males (see Table 3).

Table 4

The Demographic Data Composition of Social Studies Lecturers

S/No.	University	No. of lecturers	Male	Female
1	UNN	7	5 (71%)	2 (29%)
2	University of Port-Harcourt	6	4 (67%)	2 (33%)
3	Total	13	9 (69%)	4 (31%)

Data source generated from field work showed that 71% of lecturers teaching social studies at the UNN are males while 29% are females. Sixty-seven percent of the lecturers teaching social studies at the University of Port-Harcourt are males while 33% are females. On the average, 69% of the lecturers are males and 31% are females.

The result of items 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, and 31 are affirmative while items 26, 27, 28, and 29 disconfirmed that lecturers are equipped in teaching gender issues and encourage gender-biased classroom practices, and that evaluation is gender-biased and teaching strategy is gender insensitive.

Based on generated information in Table 5, the following conditions can ensure gender equity in social studies curriculum implementation: (1) Teaching concepts meaningful to both sexes; (2) Topics that are gender insensitive should be restructured with common nouns; (3) Learning experiences provided in the classroom

should be gender balanced; (4) Contents of social studies curriculum should be constantly revised to ensure gender equity; (5) Other measures are that mix project groups, use of both sexes models, nonisolation of any gender group in classroom activities, including the equipping of lecturers with knowledge of gender issues through conferences, current publications on gender, enlarging social studies curriculum with gender education, as well as ensuring nonbiased evaluation and teaching strategy which is gender sensitive are means of narrowing gender gap in social studies; and (6) Curriculum implementation in Nigerian universities.

Table 5

How Social Studies Curriculum Can Be Improved for Gender Equity

S/No.	Item description	SA	A	D	SD	Total
19	Teaching concepts in meaningful forms to both female and male gender.	90 (48%)	75 (40%)	13 (7%)	10 (5%)	100%
20	Topics that are gender insensitive should be restructured with common nouns that are not gender sensitive.	145 (77%)	32 (17%)	6 (3%)	5 (3%)	100%
21	Learning experiences provided in classroom are gender balanced.	80 (42.5%)	80 (42.5%)	18 (10%)	10 (5%)	100%
22	Contents of social studies curriculum should be revised to ensure gender equity.	100 (53%)	88 (47%)	-	-	100%
23	Male and female students are given projects in a mix group.	106 (56%)	41 (22%)	21 (11%)	20 (11%)	100%
24	Role models should commensurately reflect both sexes.	188 (100%)	-	-	-	100%
25	No sex group should be isolated in classroom activities.	77 (41%)	68 (36%)	30 (16%)	13 (7%)	100%
26	Lecturers are equipped in teaching gender issues.	30 (16%)	45 (24%)	50 (27%)	63 (33%)	100%
27	Lecturers encourage gender biased classroom practices.	25 (13%)	36 (19%)	50 (27%)	77 (41%)	100%
28	Evaluation is gender biased.	-	-	57 (30%)	57 (30%)	100%
29	There is need for current literature on gender issues.	90 (48%)	60 (32%)	38 (20%)	131 (70%)	100%
30	Exposing lecturers on gender issues through conferences.	100 (53%)	88 (47%)	-	-	100%
31	Social studies curriculum should be enriched with gender issues.	66 (35%)	88 (47%)	17 (19%)		100%
32	Teaching strategy is gender insensitive.	4 (2%)	18 (10%)	70 (31%)	96 (51%)	100%

Discussion on Findings

The findings of this study based on data information in Table 1 established that social studies curriculum of Nigerian universities is gender-balanced. This contradicts Nworgu's (2005) research submission that gender imbalance in the society has drifted into Nigeria's school system at all levels.

Analysis of data in Table 2 revealed that social studies curriculum is not gender biased. However, teachers used masculine terms and some social studies curriculum. Concepts are gender insensitive. The observed insensitivity in social studies curriculum agrees with Ikekonwu (2009) who found that four decades ago women did not embrace formal education, this may have given way to the slight gender gap in social studies curriculum strategy and equally gender equity of school curriculum by the pursuit of millennium development goals by nations of the world.

Research result showed that there are more females offering social studies than males. This finding concurs with Mkpa (1999), Nworgu (2005), and Ikekonwu (2009) who labeled education and liberal arts as feminine discipline, while the sciences and technology as masculine disciplines. While Offorma (2004) and

Erah (2005) perceived interest and commitment as instructive on one's career choice, thus, we can deduce that gender disparity in the number of males offering social studies is not gender imbalance prompted by discriminatory factors but on choice of male students.

Data analysis of Table 4 showed that there are a significant number of males teaching social studies in Nigeria's universities than females. This agrees with Illiya (1999) and Ikekonwu (2009) whose independent research studies affirmed that there are more females learning in nursery, primary, and secondary schools than tertiary institutions as the university. Clearly stated, there are more male lecturers in the universities.

It was found that the aspects of social studies curriculum that are gender-biased can be approved through lecturers sensitivity to content, learning experiences, and evaluation, others are restructuring of masculine concepts, fair use of role models, equipping lecturers with knowledge of gender education amongst others. This is in line with the findings and recommendations of Nworgu (2005).

Conclusions

Social studies curriculum of Nigerian universities is gender sensitive and non-gender biased to some relative extent, however, some aspects of social studies that are gender insensitive can be addressed through curriculum revision and lecturers sensitivity to gender while discharging instruction. There is glaring gender disparity in the number of male and female students offering social studies at the first degree level in Nigerian university. The perceived gender imbalance from the study is that there are more females than males as students of social studies. Conversely, there are more male lecturers than their female counterparts teaching social studies in the university. The millennium development goal which is centred at promoting gender equity in all spheres of human life portends future for a relative gender sensitive social studies curriculum in Nigerian universities. The narrowing of gender gap in social studies curriculum is a veritable means of equalizing access to education for both genders to improve their potentials in a fast transforming society.

Recommendations

The recommendations of this paper are as follows:

- (1) Social studies lecturers should be subjected to acquire gender training for adequate understanding of gender issues;
- (2) The social studies lecturer should be gender sensitive in the dissemination of instruction in the classroom;
- (3) Teaching methods and classroom activities should be gender sensitive in the sense of ensuring gender equity in classroom participation;
- (4) Social studies curriculum should be made gender sensitive in the organization of contents and learning experiences;
- (5) Evaluation processes should be gender sensitive;
- (6) Integration of both sexes in group projects is ideal for encouraging gender balance in intellectual tasking situations;
- (7) Students of both sexes in social studies classroom should be praised commensurately for their positive skills, creativity, ingenuity, and intellect in responding to learning tasks;
- (8) There is a need to revise constantly the existing social studies curriculum of Nigerian universities so as to close aspects of gender dictated gaps;

(9) Classroom management teaching strategies should be fairly equitable to students of both genders in social studies classroom;

(10) The issues and problem arising from gender stereotyping in social studies curriculum and instruction should be done through gender sensitivity workshop for social studies (lecturers) (Nwaubani & Ezegebe, 2008, p. 10).

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