QUALITY ASSURANCE AND USE OF ICT IN SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

By

NATH IHEMTUGE NZEAGWU
Department of Social Studies,
Federal College of Education,
Obudu.

Abstract
It is necessary to address all international challenges and ensure that Nigeria’s higher institutions, especially those offering Social Studies education programmes, the staff and students are of high quality and Information Communication Technology (ICT) compliant so as to fit in adequately into the modern day globalization. The paper examined the necessity for quality assurance and use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Social Studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions. It looked at the concepts of quality assurance, information and Communication Technology (ICT), Social Studies education and the need for quality assurance and ICT in Social Studies education. It concluded that since tertiary education is central to economic and political development, and vital to competitiveness in an increasingly globalizing knowledge society, higher institutions in Nigeria should be ensuring high level manpower development through training, development and inculcation of high values, especially in ICT compliance and quality. Moreover, ICT is necessary in Social Studies education which is expected to be a vehicle for national transformation. It recommends among others that ICT should be made compulsory in all Social Studies programmes in the institutions.

Education, including Social Studies education, has continued to undergo various reforms designed to meet up with current global demands. These demands include those of industry, public service and self actualization. Two major global issues, which are of interest to Social Studies graduates of Nigerian tertiary institutions are ‘quality assurance’ and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). These are among the challenges facing Nigerian education in the present day globalization that demands some innovation in order to meet up with a dynamic world system.
Quality Assurance

Quality in higher education is a multidimensional concept, which should embrace such activities as teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, facilities and academic environment (Van Ginkel & Rodrigues Dias, 2007). It is also viewed as fitness for purposes at minimum costs to society (Mishra, 2006, cited in Onu, 2010). Quality assurance is a process where the concept of performance standard, norms and outcomes overlap to form the foundation of the quality culture emerging everywhere. Different nations and cultures interpret quality differently. Quality assurance is a major policy issue in many countries of the world.

In Nigeria, there has been concern for quality of higher education and standard of teaching and learning. These concerns are expressed because of the harm they have done not only to the wider society but also to the economic and political development. It also heightened the issues of crime and generated high sense of various forms of insecurity. The primary causes of this ugly trend include poor teaching and learning environment, lack of well-equipped library and facilities as well as dilapidated conditions in which students find themselves to do their studies (Onu, 2010). In some institutions, according to Onu (2010), the right caliber of teachers is not just there, while courses are allocated not based on specialization, but on preferences of the authorities. Some departments are infested with the virus of corruption and illicit deals with students. This goes a long way to affect the quality of what we push out every year from our higher institutions. Faculties and schools are therefore constrained to produce well educated/full-baked graduates. In Social Studies, especially in primary and secondary schools, children are taught by teachers who are products of malpractice from various higher institutions.

It is therefore proper to institute measures that do not compromise quality of our products from educational institutions. It is in line with this understanding that federal government of Nigeria established the National Universities Commission (NUC). The NUC is to ensure that quality and standards are maintained in all universities across the country. Similarly the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) was established to handle aspects of technical and vocational education falling outside university education. The Board is to promote the production of skilled/semi-skilled technical manpower, to revitalize and sustain the national economy, reduce unemployment and poverty through setting and maintenance of high standards, provision of current reliable information for planning and decision making as well as adequate linkages with industry (Onu, 2010). For Colleges of Education, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) was established as its own regulatory body. These structures were put in place for quality assurance.

The shortcomings on quality have been major reasons why African tertiary institutions, particularly those in Nigeria, have found it extremely challenging and complex to find their footing on global higher education stage. They barely register on
world institutional rankings and produce a tiny percentage of world research output (UNESCO, 2009).

**Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

The introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the Nigerian education system is a welcome innovation (National Policy on Education (NPE), 2004). Information is data that have been interpreted and understood by the recipient of the massage. According to Lucey (1997), it is knowledge and understanding usable by the recipient. Agir (2001) saw information as data that has been processed manually, electronically or otherwise to aid managers in their decision making. Extrapolating from the above definitions, information thus consists of knowledge of social, political, or economic value that helps the individual see real world and take decision accordingly.

Communication and information technology firms are now making the rounds in the new world information economy (Doki, 2007). According to Aronsson (2001), a critical new component of globalization is that faster and cheaper communication tools, including fax machines, mobile phones, computer aided designs and internet and electronic communication link many people, firms and countries simultaneously. Information technologies are simply communication gadgets, equipment or facilities which improve/enhance the manner in which massage is shared, relayed, disseminated, preserved and recalled for meaningful communication purposes (Nwabueze, 2009). Hence, information technology is the acquisition, processing, storage and dissemination of vocal, pictorial, textual and numeric information by micro-electronic based combination of computing and telecommunication. It is a process which involves the use of equipments and or gadgets/electronics in gathering, processing and disseminating information to a wider public.

ICT in education has become one of the key parts of academic transformation of the 21st century. The internet has truly revolutionized how knowledge is communicated. In world’s most developed economies, the presence of ICTs has expanded exponentially and touched virtually all dimensions of the higher education enterprise. E-mail and online social networking spaces provide avenues for academic collaboration and joint research. Electronic journals have become wide spread and some fields quite substantive. Traditional publishers of books and journals have increasingly turned to the internet to distribute their publications. The open educational resources are providing free access to courses, curricular and pedagogical approaches not available locally (UNESCO, 2009).

In the wake of unbridled wave of the process of globalization grossly propelled by unprecedented wave of revolutions in the manufacture, deployment and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) it is most important for all African countries, including Nigeria, to consider tertiary education systems in the international context. The need for development of ICT is a global resolution and has been a subject
of great significance to all mankind (Olaofe, 2005). It has allowed people to access, analyze, create, exchange and use data, information and knowledge in ways that were unimaginable. The prevalence of rapid development of ICT has transformed human society from information technology age to knowledge age. In the class room it is changing the learning of students by relaxing time and space constraints as well as providing easier access to information via online journals and e-books, students portals and so on, an achievement that should not be downplayed (Gambari and Okli, 2007). Our institutions of higher learning can not exist as an island in the fast globalizing and competitive world.

**Social Studies Education**

Social studies has been defined in various ways by different authors. According to Dubey and Barth (1980), it is a process of education which utilizes the study of human life for the purpose of giving them opportunity to practice solving problems of crucial importance to both the individuals and the society. To them, the skills obtained in the process of the study will transfer values to lives of children so that decisions they make as mature citizens will be useful to them and the Nigeria society. Ololobou (1989) saw social studies as an organized, integrated study of man and his environment emphasizing on cognition, functional skills and desirable attitudes and actins for the purpose of creating effective citizens. To him, social studies education is a programme of study in which clients are exposed to carefully selected physical and human realities, with an inbuilt package for the development of skills and nurturing values, attitudes and actions conducive to the continued orderly survival of the society.

Ololobou (1992) pointed out that as an integrated discipline Social Studies should be understood as a broad and composite instruction area which draws its contents from different social sciences and the arts in order to unfold by gradual process the total environment of the child with special emphasis on his physical and cultural environments. According to Adaralegbe (1980), Social Studies is modern attempt at interdisciplinary study of a topic, a problem, an issue, a concern or an aspiration. It is a problem approach discipline through which man studies and learns about problems of survival in his environment.

Social studies education emphasizes some objectives as:

a) The creation of an awareness and understanding of our social and physical environment in order to conserve them;

b) The development of a capacity to learn and acquire certain basic skills of literacy, numeracy and critical thinking essential to the formation of sound judgment concerning social, economic and political issues.

c) The development in students, positive attitude towards the spirit of friendliness and co-operation necessary for a healthy nation and to inculcate appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hardwork, fairness and justices among others.
It emphasizes the understanding of one’s environment and impartation of knowledge skills, attitudes and values to assist the individual develop into a balanced one who knows his role in the society and is equipped and prepared to play it.

Social studies is a unified and integrated course of study drawing as concepts from wide range of areas as they affect man and his environment. Concepts which are relevant to man and his interaction with his environment are drawn. Social studies education therefore emphasizes the importance of man and places him at the center of its study.

**Need for Quality Assurance and ICT in Social Studies Education**

As has been earlier pointed out, Nigerians have been expressing concerns on the poor quality of the graduates of our tertiary institutions because of the harm they have done to both the wider society as well as economic and political development of the country. It has also affected crime rate and security situations. As custodians of culture and quality in our various higher institutions, we owe our children a duty not to compromise quality in aspects of education system. Equal opportunities should also be provided for all scholars, regardless of gender, place of origin or ethnicity to achieve the highest level of education provided in our higher institutions.

Social studies is a corrective course of study which is aimed at correcting the deficiencies of our educational system which is ill-equipped to cope with the demands of social harmony, national unity and national consciousness. Social studies education can instill the kind of knowledge, skills, beliefs, attitudes and values which the Nigerian child should possess. Graduates of social studies from the tertiary institutions are the ones who are to teach the young Nigerians these tenets. It therefore becomes necessary that quality must be assured if the objectives of creating the course of study is to be achieved. Poor quality social studies graduates would only leave the young Nigerians deficient of the values, attitudes and skills which the Nigerian child must possess. Social studies is aimed at being an instrument in effecting integrated development or nation building. Social studies educators, who are graduates of the tertiary institutions, are to teach pupils the content, knowledge and intellectual skills so as to be effective citizens. The social studies that becomes effective in promoting the desired integrated development is that which is properly oriented in respect of the knowledge it imparts, the capacity of critical thinking which it encourages, the values and attitude it undertakes to develop and the activities it organizes. This can help in making the people and this country an integrated nation that will be set to develop all its resources for the overall good of the nation. The making of people for this odious task can only be done through quality educators, hence the nation the need to ensure quality in the social studies education in tertiary institutions.

There is also the need to employ and use information and communication technology in social studies education, if the quality is to be achieved and maintained. There is unbridled wave of globalization propelled by the use of ICTs, therefore, it is
important that Nigerians consider tertiary education systems, including that of social studies, in the international context. Computers, software, networks, satellite links and related systems that allow people to access, analyze, create exchange and use data, information and knowledge, should be used in social studies education in the Nigerian tertiary institutions. The students’ learning experience need to be enriched. Easier access to information via online journals and e-books should help assure quality of social studies graduates.

Lecturers and social studies students should develop competences to make personal use of ICT, competency to master a range of educational paradigms that make use of ICT, sufficient competency to make use of ICTs as mind tools, competency to make use of ICT as a tool for teaching as well as competency in understanding the policy dimension of the use of ICT for teaching and learning. Under the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), priority has been given to the development of ICT, recognizing it as a major vehicle for African development. Development must be anchored on socio-economic provisions that are capable of engendering growth and sustainable development. Therefore social studies education, which is aimed at being instrument for effecting integrated development and nation building must incorporate ICT into its curriculum. This will go a long way in assuring the quality of its products as well as achieving the objectives for its introduction into the school system.

Conclusion

According to Materu (2007), tertiary education is central to economic and political development, and vital to competitiveness in an increasingly globalizing knowledge society. In the case of Africa, including Nigeria, tertiary education plays a critical capacity-building and professional training role in support of all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Promoting faster technological catch-up will improve the country’s ability to maximize its economic output.

Our higher institutions can contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training, develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individuals and the society, develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments, acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society. Since social studies education is one of the vehicles in achieving the above objectives, it is necessary that quality be assured in the course of study, especially in tertiary institutions.

International challenges must be addressed in the institutions whereby staff and students must be IT compliant so as to fit into the global digital process. This will open up access, increase our competitive abilities and produce better graduates from the institutions. High level of integrity must be demonstrated in the discharge of duties while the culture of quality must be built and sustained. The lack of quality and
Nath Ihemtuge Nzeagwu

technology has a major implication of mainly pushing out students who are not digital to the job market without adequate preparation.

Recommendations
1) Proper accreditation should be done for all social studies programmes offered in Nigerian tertiary institutions to assure quality. The educational system should also device a method of checking various accreditation officials who think that opportunity for accreditation is an opportunity for making money. This raises a situation where an institution on record has its programmes accredited while on ground there is nothing to show for it.
2) The management of higher education and various institutions of higher learning should not compromise staff and students discipline, sanction and motivations. Where possible, they should make available provision for staff training and retraining. The staff should also be encouraged to attend workshops and conferences.
3) Mutual (2003) has noted that ICTs development in Africa has been impeded by insufficient infrastructure, poor provision of telecommunication networks, lack of locally created contents, lack of personal computers, technophobia and poor policy regimes, a view supported by Onu (2010) who pointed out that the African continent has not been able to benefit much from information revolution because of dearth of facilities. Efforts should therefore be made by the management of Nigerian higher institutions to ensure that these facilities are made available in the institutions.
4) Social studies department in the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria should take deliberate steps to enforce the use of the new technologies in teaching and learning. analogue lecturers are rusty and have not much to offer. Lecturers should not rely on old notes. Dictating of notes should be de-emphasized and internet facilities should be made available and accessible to students at affordable rates, if not free.

References


