
Organizing an Effective Social Studies Departmental Library for Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria

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Abstract

The decadence in the reading habits of our youths, especially in tertiary education institutions where they do not feel the need to read except in preparation for exams and tests, has become a serious cause for concern for education in all disciplines. Departments In tertiary institutions of education have an urgent responsibility to curb this menace. This paper highlights the setting up of an effective Social Studies Department library as a major way of dealing with the situation apart from contributing in many other ways to meet the aims and objectives of social studies education. The paper identifies the aims and objectives as well as what it takes to establish such a library and how it can contribute to the sustenance of democracy in the wider society.

Keywords: Social Studies, Departmental Library, Democracy.

In the present democratic dispensation, there is the need for students in Nigeria to broaden their scope of knowledge to meet up with the trend of global democracy. Students are vibrant and able bodied youths who will be leaders of tomorrow, hence they need to be more knowledgeable in the things around them. But from the look of things in our higher institutions, students are more concerned with reading only for tests and exams and this narrows their scope of reasoning and thinking and even looking at issues critically.

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There is the saying that knowledge is power, and most of this knowledge comes through reading far and wide. When we hear some of our students in higher institutions speak in public, we wonder what they have been doing with their time, obviously they do not spend time seeking and acquiring knowledge. Let us take for example some of the students in the higher institution or even in this department. They hardly visited the library and when asked why, they would tell you that there are no books there, or give one excuse or the other. But the truth of the matter is that they do not even know the usefulness of the library, or they do not even see any reason why they should go there. If this young democracy in Nigeria is to be sustained, one would suggest that we should start contributing in any way we can no matter how little to support it. The writer intends to start with organizing departmental libraries, starting with that of social studies department in Federal College of Education Kano.

Aim and Objectives of Social studies Education

Before embarking on organizing a departmental library there is the need to be focused, and being focused here means knowing the aims and objectives of that particular subject department, because the library is to assist in achieving the aims and objectives of that particular department. Hence there is the need to know what social studies is all about, and its aims and objectives. According to Adekeye (1982), "Social studies deals with how man lives and how his life is affected by things around him; things like other people, lakes, rivers, forests, mountains and others. It deals essentially with human groups and the environment, in other words, the community. This community embraces the physical, social, political, economic, psychological and cultural aspects that help to influence man. He goes further to explain that social studies is related to community life, providing the opportunity for discussing current affairs and providing ways of looking for solutions to such problems as crime corruption, robbery etc. Therefore, social studies in Nigeria is perceived as an integrated field of study with focus on man and his interaction with his environment, and the production of functional citizenry.

Having seen what social studies is about, let us look at its aims and objectives. According to Joyce (1972) the ultimate aims of social studies are:

1. **Personal (or Humanistic) Education:** Preparing the learner to find meaning in his life and make it worthwhile through understanding life, his community and the world.
2. **Social (or Citizenship) Education:** Preparing the learner to be an effective, efficient and functional member of his society.

3. **Intellectual Education:** Equipping the learner with intellectual skills, competencies or know-how essential for the critical and constructive analysis of issues, rational decision making and problem solving.

DuBey and Barth (1980) and Ezegebe (1989) perceived the objectives of social studies for all levels as.

1. Man awareness of his environment and beyond and his survival in them.
2. Man utilizing his reasoning and imagination critically and constructively to identify and solve his personal and societal problems and contribute to national development.
3. Man acquiring skills, attitude and values essential for his harmonious and effective coexistence, independence and functionality.

The Library

According to the Universal Encyclopedia Vol 12 (1987) in Iya (2005), “a library is an organized collection of books and other informational materials covering the whole field of knowledge or any part of it and these materials can be available to everyone or restricted to a particular group -in the community”.

Libraries are homes for books and are divided into types based on their purpose, content and the general pattern of services they render. Therefore the types of libraries are:

1. School library
2. Academic library
3. Public library
4. National library
5. Private library
6. Special library

For the purpose of this write up the writer is concerned with the academic library because the social studies departmental library comes under that category. The academic library principally exists to serve all the informational needs of the academic community it serves. The essential ‘objectives of academic libraries are to support the teaching and research in the institution through the acquisition of print and non print materials.

Essential Requirements in Setting Up and Organizing an Effective Social Studies Departmental Library

There are some basic tasks that need to be carried out in preparing to set up an effective social studies departmental library:

1. Setting up a library committee headed by a teacher librarian can be done by the head of the department. This should be made up of the teacher librarian, a library assistant with at least a diploma in library science and a student from Social Studies Student Association of Nigeria (SOSTAN) of the department.
2. Preparing the library room and to on this point, decide on the needs of the library or where best to put the library, i.e. location. Adequate ventilation and good reading light should be provided and rain should be prevented from entering the room as much as possible, windows should be netted and provisions made for the doors to be firmly secured when the library is not in use so as to protect the library materials.
3. Decide on furniture needs. Essential furniture needs are book shelves, tables and chairs/seats, desks and library assistant chair and table for teacher librarian. The furniture should be such that last a long time. Essential office equipment and stationery should be put into consideration such as record box, rubber stamps, stapler, date stamp. waste paper basket, typewriter, ball point pen/biros, exercise books. cardboard catalogue cards, e.tc.
4. Consider choosing stock for the library. Stock for the library should include; some textbooks, reference materials such as dictionaries, encyclopedia, and information books, serials, periodicals etc.
5. Organizing the books and other materials. This is another step in library work; it is called classification and cataloguing i.e. a method of arranging materials so that items on the same topic are kept together or near each other on the bookshelf. To choose the best classification system depends on the level and type of institution. There are two major types of classification among others which are the Library of Congress Classification Scheme (LCC) and the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) scheme. The Dewey Decimal classification scheme is the most popular worldwide owing to its advantages. Some of these advantages are: it is very conventional to adapt, it permits addition easily. It is called Dewey because the idea was thought out by Melvil Dewey. It is called Decimal because a little dot or decimal point is used and a system or a scheme, because it is a plan or order. It is called classification because materials are arranged in classes. This is the type of classification mostly used in colleges of education. The system classifies knowledge into ten (10) broad subjects which are coded by numbers. Particular subjects are given a range of coded numbers recognized throughout the world and they are arranged as follows:

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Standard Subject	Simple Code
Reference	000
Philosophy	100
Religion	200
Social science	300
Languages	400
Sciences	500
Technology	600
Arts	700
Literature	800
History and geography,	900

Source: DDC (1996)

From the above it can be seen that the one that concerns organizing a social studies departmental library falls under social sciences with the code 300'. With some elaborations it shall be found that they cover virtually every aspect of social science and social studies conclusively. With the classification and cataloging in social studies, virtually all courses and topics will be affected and with time there is no information that will be needed by the library's patron from social studies department that will not be easily accessible.

After classifying the materials the remaining tasks, are: to make a shelf list, produce a catalogue in form of title or author catalogue as the case may be, and organize the lending system.

6. Making library catalogue: Cataloguing library materials is another great task. A library catalogue tells what a particular library holds. It also helps to direct on where to find the materials. It also answers questions posed by users. There are several types of catalogues such as author and title catalogue. It can be done with an exercise book or in form of a card. For an effective social studies departmental library, detailed cataloguing may not be required. For this purpose, the exercise book catalogue will be preferable and the steps on how it can be done are as follows:
 - a. Divide each page of the exercise book into four columns one for title, one for author, one for accession numbers, and one for subjects.
 - b. Put all titles starting with 'A' together on the same page(s), all titles starting with 'B' together on the same page(s), and so on until, you get to 'Z' as shown in the table below. It is a useful method, if you cannot obtain catalogue cards and your library stock is small (just as in the case of the social studies departmental library).

Table 1: A Title Catalogue in an Exercise Book

Title	Author	Acc No	Subject
Civil and Political Right Migration	Monday John	97	Politics
International organization	Ali Mohammed	10	Population
	Musa Ibrahim	27	International Relations

Source: (Dara 2000)

Keeping the library perpetually organized is a must. Instructions and rules should also be placed at strategic places for easy direction in the library.

7. Budgeting and keeping of simple accounts. This is an essential part of setting up and running a departmental library and indeed any library. Budgeting entails estimate of probable future income and expenditure. This is what the teacher-librarian should handle effectively. It is vital to keep a record of everything spent on the library room from furniture, equipment, stationery, stock, etc by asking for and keeping receipts. The Head of Department may demand for these. Keep your own account note book. It helps to check how much you have spent on the library, it will also help you budget for the future.
8. Advertise the library: Ensure that the library is well advertised to both students and staff of the department. Make the library as inviting as possible by bringing in current materials. As a teacher- librarian, you must be current and one of the ways of achieving this is by attending conferences, seminars and workshops organized by bigger libraries. The teacher librarian must as a matter of mastery have at least a certificate in librarianship to be able to function effectively in the department library.

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Democracy is the most preferred system of government that is known to man. It is unarguably the most favourable in the realization of human potentials. It entails the power people have to choose their leaders which shows the supremacy of the people and their will. For a sustainable democracy there is need for proper empowerment for development through acquisition of knowledge which can be gotten from the use of the library.

After seeing the aims and objectives of social studies education, it is important therefore, that there is need for organizing an effective social studies department library for students and teachers of the department to have an all round development. With the

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knowledge acquired from the library the students especially will be able to contribute meaningfully to the promotion of a democratic society by equipping themselves with the intellectual skills and competencies essential for the critical and constructive analysis of issues, rational decision-making and problem-solving.

The establishment of an effective social studies departmental library will enable the students to be aware of their legal rights to express their feelings and expose societal ills and thereby uphold democracy. It will help inculcate in them the right type of attitude and instill in them the necessary social skills for political participation and transformation which will help in consolidating the democratic process. It will equip the students with the understanding that civic ideas and the practice of citizenship are critical for full participation in the society.

Students should be given ample opportunity to practice democratic values and skills. This is because democracy is not just a form of government but a way of improving human relations in a dynamic society. As such, citizens need to be well enlightened on different aspects of political and civic responsibilities and one way of achieving this is by encouraging the students to make use of the departmental Library. This will only be possible if the library is in place, is well organized and attractive.

One of the objectives of social studies education is to make man aware of his environment and beyond by providing him with adequate information and knowledge which will make him deduce or identify how he can adapt, modify or change his environment to satisfy his needs and interests, as well as contribute to national development. In other words, knowledgeable citizenry is a major force for social stability, national development and substance of democratic institution and processes. One of the surest way students can be turned into truly knowledgeable citizens is having an adequate and effective social studies departmental library in order to meet the information needs of both staff and students in the department.

To develop in the students right types of attitudes and values such as tolerance, loyalty, diligence, discipline, cooperation, trustworthiness, obedience, honesty, patriotism, sympathy, participation, understanding, interdependence, fairness and justice, self respect, respect for others and for constituted authority, all of which are needed for the substance of democracy in Nigeria, hence the need for well organized social studies departmental library cannot be over-emphasized. Materials that will be kept in such a library will be such that will help to develop the individual with all the positive attitudes and values as listed above which would make for a responsible and effective citizenry.

The extent to which democracy can be achieved in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria depends on the extent to which citizens are developed and equipped with information and knowledge. For democracy to thrive, citizens who hope to reap the benefit of democracy must be willing to acquire knowledge and enlarge their intellectual horizon by reading far and wide. It is through the patronage of the departmental library that such transformation can be engendered and nurtured for development.

The process of awareness, appropriation and understanding of the social world is learned fully only through social studies. Making thoughtful decisions requires citizens to have content knowledge in many areas, evaluate the evidence their knowledge gives them in a complex democratic society such as Nigeria in which citizens are expected always to make informed decisions.

Conclusion

The purpose of social studies department by and large is to turn out a well informed and knowledgeable citizenry which is a major factor in social stability. National development and sustenance of democratic ideals, institutions and processes, an effective social studies departmental library is a sine qua non in this process as it reinforces and complements classroom lectures and other teaching processes. A social studies departmental library therefore is a viable instrument for sustainable democracy.

Recommendations

In the light of the above, the following are recommended:

1. There is the need for the creation of awareness from the department to the college management on the need for the establishment of social studies departmental library.
2. Orientation programmes should be given to students from time to time to enlighten them on the need to use the library not only for exams and tests but for the acquisition of knowledge for effective and efficient participation in the democratic process in the country.
3. The departmental librarian and his/her assistant should always attend conferences, seminars and workshops to be abreast with the happening in librarianships.
4. Materials for this library should be sort both locally and internationally to enhance globalization in the democratic dispensation.

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