



CHAPTER 36

CONTRIBUTIONS OF SOCIAL STUDIES TO THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

Education is the only indispensable tool for training children in the societal norms and values (Edinyan, Effiom, Edwin, & Doris, 2020). It is seen as the corner stone for individual development and societal advancement in any given society. Education is a social service designed to serve the needs of the society and for the intellectual development of individual members of the society. Education tends to focus on a positive change of altitude individual and to acquire skills. Education is the process by which the student is provided with the knowledge, skills and values which a society believes are necessary (Ogundare, 2000), Education in its everyday sense could mean formal training that is given in schools and institutions, that is, the acquisition of the ability to read and write and calculate. Education is universally perceived and acknowledged as an effective tool for meaningful development in every society, be it social, economic, technological and political. It is for the development of individuals into sound and effective citizens for social advancement. Indeed, the Nigerian idea of acquisition of knowledge depends on the need to "form people into sound and compelling residents" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

Special education is a modified programme which involves some unique tools, techniques and research efforts in improving instructional arrangements to meet the need of exceptional children. According to NOUN (2015), Special education is that type of education that is specially designed to meet the uncommon needs of exceptional students. It is the education of learners with special needs in a way that addresses the learners' individual differences and needs. According to PNG (2006) Special Education is the design and delivery of teaching and learning strategies for individuals with disabilities or learning difficulties who may or may not be enrolled in regular schools. While Obani (2004), Obani (2006), west wood (2003) and Foreman (2016) have the views that, Special need education is the



education specially designed to suit the special needs children with learning problem and learning difficulties as a result of disabilities and other forms. Special Education looks beyond the ordinary methods and provision of the conventional school system in order to tackle the problems affecting the handicapped child's ability to learn effectively. Special education is "Child Centred and not Subject Centred" (Barik, 2018).

Social Studies in a field of study that mandate on the formulation of acceptable positive attitude and values for the young ones to imbibe and live with fast increasing (Egan, 2021). Children when adequately trained in the societal norms and values make for effective future development and advancement of the society. Studies as a unified discipline has the potentials to drive the common Nigerian attitude and values in any field of knowledge. Studies have shown that when teachers and administrators' model core positive attitude and values and students learn skills to resolve conflict peacefully, practice pro-social behaviours, and engage in service to the community, societies will show lower incidence of violence (Virginia CEP, 2000, in Egan, 2021). Social studies is a field of study that provides a vital forum for developing the thinking, skills as well as the values and attitudes that make the 'good citizen' and equip him/her for coping with change (Obadiora, 2019). Social studies education as an area of study that has alot of contributions towards the inculcation of positive attitude and values in any given society. National Council for Social Studies (2013) opines that Social Studies Education it instils in the learners, disciplinary knowledge; inquiry, interpersonal, and critical thinking skills; respect for the underlying values of a diverse democratic society; interest in public affairs and competencies of self-government. And that each capacity contributes uniquely to responsible citizenship. Osakwe (2012) views that, Social Studies is a course of concentration that develops people in different areas of his communication with his kindred partner. It involves the adult and the young within the society to develop their competencies to enable them solve and manage the socio- economic and physical forces arising in their midst. Abubakar (2013) opines that social studies is not concerned with either the study of men per say, rather with the study of man within the context of his environment, his social, physical, political, economic, cultural and technological environment. The main contributions that children with special needs stand to gain from Social Studies Education which will enable them to fit socially in to the society are included;

1. Inculcation of positive attitudes
2. Inculcation of values,
3. Have better spatial awareness,
4. Learn critical thinking skills,
5. Gain citizenship skills,
6. Increase socio-cultural, economic and historical awareness,
7. Increase knowledge of world and current affairs,
8. Develop skills for cross-curricular learning.



Contributions of Social Studies to Special Needs Education learners in Nigeria

1. Inculcation of positive attitudes: Positive attitude is a weapon used by Social Studies to instill likes, mental position, positive feeling associated with ideas and objects, fosters enthusiasm, promotes self-esteem, and creates an atmosphere conducive to learning to special needs learners. It also develop permanent way of thinking, feeling and behaving toward good behaviours to special needs learners. Cetin (2006) views attitude as tendency which is attributed to individuals and creates ideas, feelings and behaviors about a psychological object in an orderly manner. According to Sen (2013), attitudes which cause individuals to always behave in the same way to people, objects, events and foundations are constant and unchangeable beliefs, feelings and tendencies (Kara, 2010). While the positive attitudes serve a better comprehension of the nature of learning for the learners, it also makes the students more open to learning, increases their expectations from learning process and reduces their anxiety levels. According to Niyi(1998) defined positive attitudes as procedures used to guide conduct in the classroom, not tolerating disruptions and other forms of unruly behavior by the learners in your classroom.

2. Values: Social studies teaching the special needs learners the criteria of judging 'things' (people, objects, ideas, actions and situations) to be good worthwhile, desirable or on the other hand, bad, worthless, despicable and how values can be subjective based on what a certain community understands and judges as good and bad, right and wrong. According to Celikkaya & Filoglu (2014) Values are the uniting phenomena adopted by the society or individuals, criteria which are believed to meet the needs of the society and be good for the individual's benefit, judgments related to conscious, emotions, and excitement and motives which are imprinted in the individual's conscious and shapes the behaviours. Social studies is contributing toward the teaching of standards conduct of beauty, efficiency or worth that an individual believes in and tries to live up to and maintains in any given society to the special need learners. No one has ever seen a value, it is exist only in our minds. Sen (2013) sees value as interest, pleasure, likes, prefer, desire, wants; goals, needs and moral obligations. All these have been taught by social studies education to the special needs learners. Human values naturally undergo continual changes everyday life. Value education in the classroom deals with the inculcating in the individual, some social behaviours and group activities, attitudes, values and feelings.

3. Have better spatial awareness: Social studies can help with special needs learners gain a better interpretation of the physical world. Rather than using the internet to find the location of a country, they can look at a globe or physical map in their textbook. With more spatial awareness, they can more easily determine the physical distance between their locations and other countries around the world. It may also encourage learners to explore the different regions of the world through the use of magazines, videos, pictures and interactive maps. Social studies classes



such as geography can also teach students what cardinal directions are and how to locate North, South, East and West on a map (Abdullahi, 2016). Students can use these skills to help them get from place to place when looking at a map if they were ever without a GPS on their phones.

4. Learn critical thinking skills: as special needs education learners, learn about different aspects of social studies and ability to think clearly and rationally, understanding the logical connection between ideas. Learners can also gain critical thinking skills, such as the ability to understand the relationship between two ideas, build logical arguments, approach challenges carefully and reflect neutrally on others' beliefs and values. With these skills, they can look at decisions made in history and analyze the advantages and disadvantages of those choices. According to Dubey and Barth (1980), Kissock (1981) and NCSS (2013) have on the views that, Social Studies learners can also use their understanding of past decisions to make informed choices about more current issues in any given society. Social studies education helps in intellectual discipline process of actively, understanding and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing and synthesizing of knowledge to the special needs learners in Nigeria. Cetin (2006) added that, critical thinking skills consists of; analysis, interpretation, inference, explanation, self-regulation, open-mindedness, and problem-solving.

5. Gain citizenship skills: Social studies classes teach special needs learners they are part of a society that requires structure to operate well. This begins in elementary school when students work together to create and follow classroom rules. It continues as they get older and study the branches of government, the electoral process and how citizens interact in a society governed by laws. The curriculum in many schools also compares the United States government to foreign governments where students can use critical thinking skills to analyze the differences in various governing systems (Musa, Bichi & Suleiman, 2021).

6. Increase socio-cultural, economic and historical awareness: Special needs learners have many opportunities in their social studies classes to gain a larger understanding of the cultures in other countries. As they learn about the physical geography of other locations around the world, they can learn the cultural differences by studying the foundations of sociology and anthropology. As they discover the differences, many begin to see the similarities as well. According to Edinyan and Ubi (2013) stated that, when instructors give students the opportunity to experience other cultures through videos, interactive maps, discussions and pictures, they are more likely to have meaningful experiences with people of different backgrounds in the future. As students get older, they begin to gain a broad understanding of basic economics. Learning about the economy can give special needs learners a better ideas of how their financial decisions can affect their future and the future of civilization. They also learn concepts such as the four factors of production, what a recession is and how it can impact the country's economy and how to handle their own finances. Likewise, studying the history of the world gives many students an appreciation and respect for the past. When



learners know about the past, they can better understand that history made the world as it is now. Okam (2012) opines that, recounting the biographies of others and the rise and fall of past civilizations makes it possible to learn from the past and plan for a better future.

7. Increase knowledge of world and current affairs: Social studies topics cover such a broad range of topics, special needs learners can get a better grasp of past and current world affairs. They have the chance to learn about political affiliations, conflicts and alliances between countries. This can give students a clearer understanding of how countries work together to create a functioning world. Students can also learn other aspects of world affairs, such as the financial interests of various regions, human rights and social issues and how they differ based on cultural and social influences within each region. Shuaibu (2015) stated that, Social studies subject focuses on economics, cultural differences or societal changes, which provides a conducive environment for discussing current events around the world. Discussing current events in a social studies class can help special needs learners gain a deeper real-world understanding of their own government and the government of other countries. Social studies teachers can conduct instructor-led discussions about different current events, such as elections or changes in the economy, to teach students how to analyze and debate their differing opinions with civility and respect for others.

8. Develop skills for cross-curricular learning: Social studies teaches special needs learners a skills they can use in other subjects as well. Non-fiction texts found in social studies books can help students develop higher-order thinking skills, such as problem-solving, visualizing, questioning and thinking creatively. Depending on the higher-order skill they're learning in class, the use of pictures, maps, charts and graphs can teach them to interpret and analyze information more thoroughly. Studying social studies topics like geography also helps students develop the abilities to read and process text features in non-fiction text, which they often see in other academic subjects, such as science and English. Text features include things like the index, headings, bold words, sidebars and glossary. Lastly, social studies can help students build their vocabulary and teach them how to understand context clues to determine a word's meaning by seeing it in context with other, more familiar, words (Ossai, 2010).

Implications of Social Studies to Special Needs Education Learners in Nigeria

1. Social Studies education has instilled positive feelings associated with ideas, fosters enthusiasm, promotes self-esteem, and creates conducive atmosphere for learning to special needs learners.
2. Social Studies education makes learners with special need education capacity to learn behaviour as the collective conception of what is considered good, desirable and proper or improper in the society.
3. Social Studies education makes special needs learners to get better interpretation of the physical world.



4. Social Studies education make special needs learners' ability to understand the relationship between two ideas and build logical arguments.
5. Social Studies education makes learners with special needs to know how to interact in a society governed by law.
6. Social Studies education make learners with special need gain a large understanding of the socio-cultural awareness in other society or culture.
7. Social studies education makes special needs learners got a better grasp of past and current world affairs.
8. Social Studies develop learning skills in other subjects such as; English, sciences, geography, history, government among others to special needs learners in Nigeria.

Conclusion

On the basis of the chapter, conclusion is made to the fact that, Social Studies education has contributed immensely to special need education learners. The major contributions that children with special needs stands and gained from Social Studies education that enable them to fit socially in to the society are included; inculcations of positive attitudes, inculcations of values, have learned better spatial awareness, learned critical thinking skills, gained citizenship skills, increased socio-cultural, economic and historical awareness, increased knowledge of world and current affairs, and develop skills for cross-curricular learning. It also to get better interpretation of the physical world.

The chapter reveals that, Social Studies education has played a role in the instilling of positive feelings associated with ideas, fosters enthusiasm, promotes self-esteem, and creates conducive atmosphere for learning to special needs learners. It makes learners with special need education capacity to learn behaviour as the collective conception of what is considered good, desirable and proper or improper in the society. Consequently, it taught learners how to interact in the society, rational and critical thinking of how to solve problems among others in the society. Therefore, Social Studies education has contributed a lot toward the better education and lives of special needs education learners in Nigeria.

Summary

The chapter examined the contributions of Social Studies to the education of children with special needs in Nigeria. The chapter discussed the concept of education, special need education and social studies. The chapter outline and elaborated the contributions of social studies to special needs education learners in Nigeria which included; inculcation of positive attitudes and values, have better spatial awareness, learn critical thinking skills, gain citizenship skills, increase socio-cultural, economic and historical awareness, increase knowledge of world and current affairs, and develop skills for cross-curricular learning. The chapter listed some implications of teaching social studies to special needs education learners in Nigeria which included; instilled positive feelings associated with ideas



and fosters enthusiasm to special needs learners, taught them good and desirable values in the society, get better interpretation of the physical world, ability to understand the relationship between two ideas and build logical arguments, how to interact in a society governed by law, understanding of the socio-cultural awareness in other society or culture, got a better grasp of past and current world affairs and develop learning skills in other subjects. Consequently, the chapter suggested that; government, non-governmental organization and other education stakeholders should give more priority to special needs education and social studies education in order to develop the teaching and learning process among the handicapped learners in Nigeria, Social Studies teachers should be given much consideration in teaching of positive attitudes and values to special need education learners in Nigeria, Seminar, workshop and conference should be organized to Social Studies teachers in order to re-affirm discipline, attitudes and values to them so as to serve as role model to the learners.

Suggestions

In view of the above, the paper suggested the following:

1. Government, non-governmental organization and other education stakeholders should give more priority to special needs education and social studies in order to develop the teaching and learning process among the handicapped learners in Nigeria.
2. Social Studies teachers should be given much consideration in teaching of positive attitudes and values to special need education learners in Nigeria.
3. Seminar, workshop and conference should be organized to Social Studies teachers in order to re-affirm discipline, attitudes and values to them so as to serve as role model to the learners.

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