

EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This study tries to explore the effectiveness of teaching of social studies at school level. The study tries to portray those criteria that are illustrated in different books by different writers. Findings have been drawn on the basis of the answers to the focused questions. Problems found in the field as perceived by the respondents are presented along with further areas of research. Social studies is the studies of human beings and human relation and the relation with environment. It is necessary to provide knowledge to the students about where they are living. It is becoming more important in the contemporary world. So, the policy makers and the stakeholders have to be serious to improve its teaching by finding suitable measures.

INTRODUCTION

Education is regarded as a necessary means for the development of individual personality. It helps create tracks ahead in each and every sector of human possibilities, so it is the supreme wealth of individual. Education opens the faculty of human mind as it is the backbone of socio-economic development of a nation. Human resource is the most important resource for the development of every sector of the physical world and it is education that prepares required human resources. Education can be defined as the process of giving training and instruction on new knowledge. There are two types of education system: formal and informal. Formal education is provided in certain educational structure in fixed time frame and it is received grade wise. The history of formal education started from Athens when Plato opened 'Academy' four century before Jesus Christ. And this system spread all over the world in the last two thousand years.

In Nepal, the history of formal education is not very long. It was started in 1863 A.D. but was not fully developed. The well planned and managed formal education system started only after 1955 A.D. when the then government formed the Nepal National Education Commission.

Only five subjects: Vernacular languages, Mathematics, Science, Geography and History were offered in school education before 1933 A.D. Social studies had been incorporated in School Leaving Certificate curriculum with the contents of social sciences, geography and history in 1933 A.D. National Education Commission (1955) submitted a report giving importance to 'Social study' as a separate subject with scientific syllabus. According to the recommendation of the report, social studies teaching started in Primary Level since 1960 A.D. A separate and compulsory course combined with the contents of different social sciences weighting 100 full marks was started in the name of 'Social Study' at the secondary

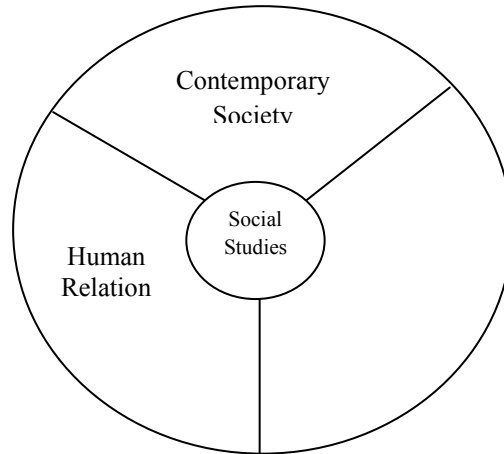
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level since 2000 A.D. (Pandey, 1993: 6). Social studies education was said to be necessary to understand the contemporary society and context.

SOCIAL STUDIES AS A TEACHING SUBJECT

“Social studies deals with the studies of human being and his relationship with other human beings and with his environment” (Jerolemick, 1971: 11). This can be shown in the following figure:

Figure 1: Different Dimensions of Social Studies



Without the knowledge of human to human relationship and human to environment the full-fledged personality of an individual will not be formed. Effective teaching of social studies is to develop appropriate way to acquaint students with their social life. Social studies is a subject consisting of different social science contents as the ingredients. The Encyclopedia of Social science denotes it that “Social studies are those subjects which are studied from social sciences.”

“Social studies is not an individual subject, discipline or science. It is a field of study which deals with human and his relation to other human beings in environment. It draws its content from several social sciences but its characteristics are not determined by anyone of them” (Bining and Bining, 1952: 9). The following diagrams presents the scope of social st.

Diagram 1: Scope and Importance of Social Studies

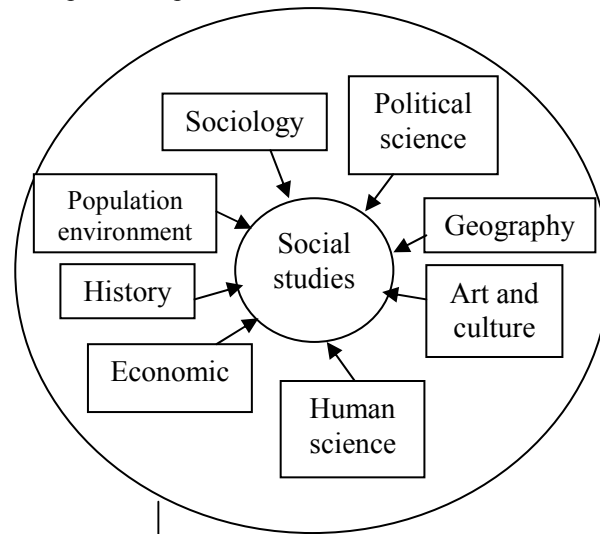
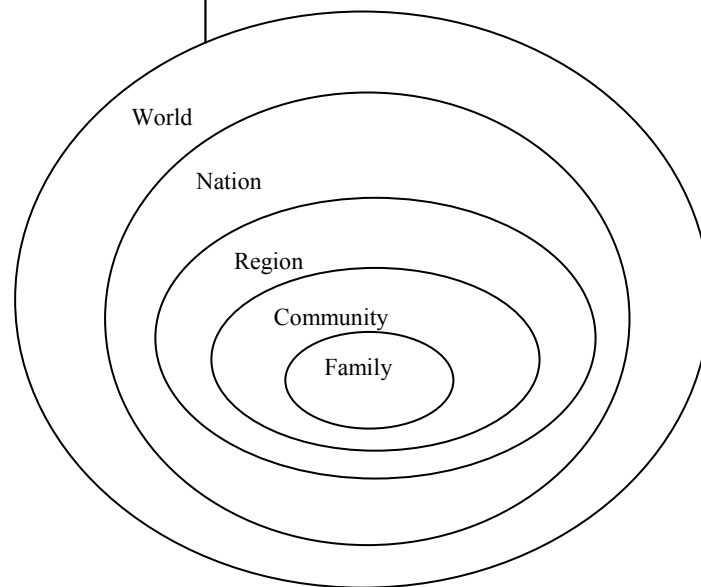


Diagram 2: Scope of Social Studies



Both the diagrams illustrate the scope and importance of social studies education. Social studies are a field of study which provides knowledge as an integrated nature of instructional program. It helps to make human relationship

larger adjusting it with own environment. The objective of the social studies teaching is to prepare an ideal and qualified citizen for a nation.

Qualified subject teachers, relevant subject matters for each grade, coherence between the exercises given in text books and subject matters, appropriate physical environment within and outside the classroom teaching, coherence between the methods illustrated in instructional planning and the methods used in class room teaching are necessary conditions for effective teaching of social studies (Quaiyum, 2007: 34-149). Without fulfilling those conditions, the teaching of social studies will not be effective. Hence, this study tries to analyze the effectiveness of social studies teaching by identifying existing problems after half century of the introduction of it in school education.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The study is basically based on primary data. The information was gathered from two higher secondary schools of Katike Deurali and Panchkhal VDC of Kavre district. The university teachers of social studies areas (Political Science Education, History Education, Economics Education and Geography Education) of Central Department of Education at Kirtipur were selected by using purposive sampling method for taking interview. To gather the information, the researcher conducted interview with forty students, two head teachers, and two school teachers of social studies, two school supervisors and sixteen university teachers. The study site was observed in its natural setting to identify the effectiveness of social studies teaching. Sixteen university teachers went to there schools to observe and evaluate the teaching practice of university students as internal supervisors and final evaluators of social studies subject. Two school teachers were also interviewed to find out the existing problems of social studies teaching. Similarly, different books, magazines, news papers, journals etc. were also reviewed as the secondary source of data for the research study. The study has adopted interpretive technique to derive substantive information.

DISCUSSION ON THE ISSUES

There are different instructional materials- Text books, Reference books, News papers, Magazine, Charts, Graph, Map, Model and Specimen; Black Board \Chalk Board, Flannel Board, Bulletin Board and Scrap Board that can be used in social studies teaching (Pandey, 1973: 102-128). Similarly, Lecture method, Discussion method, Inquiry method, Discovery method, Project method, Observation method, Drama and role play method can be used in teaching social studies subject (Budathokee, 1995: 38-65). Trained teacher, conducive environment of school with good physical facility are also the prerequisites of teaching social studies effectively.

ISSUES ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES

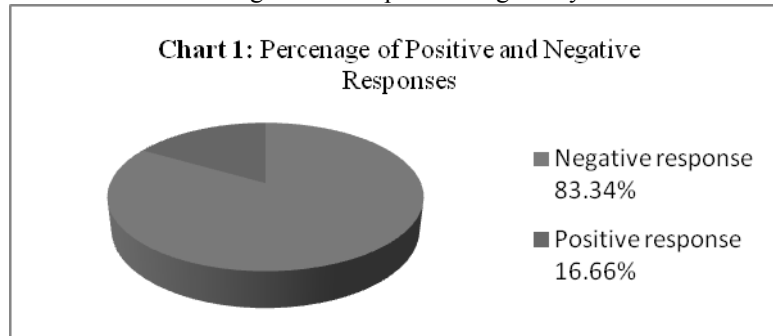
These questions were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of social studies teaching:

- (1) Is the instructional planning prepared to teach social studies subject in school?
- (2) Are the lesson plans prepared by the subject teachers before entering the classroom?

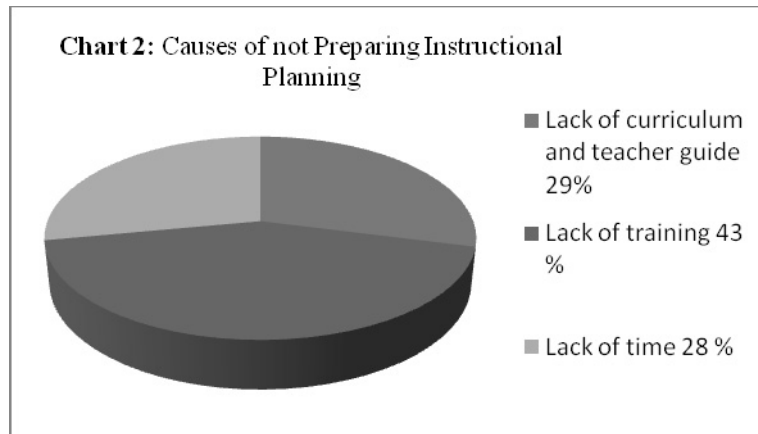
- (3) Is the lesson plan relevant to the subject matter?
- (4) Are the teaching methods used in classroom relevant with the nature of subject matters?
- (5) How do the teachers evaluate student’s achievements?
- (6) What is the physical condition of schools and what is its impact on teaching of social studies?

FINDINGS

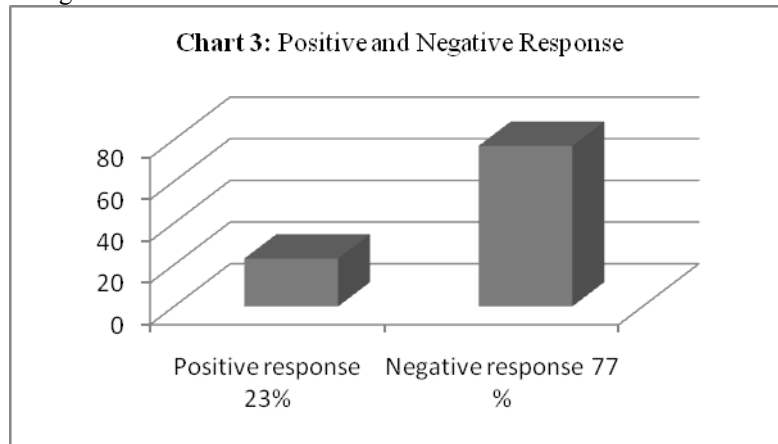
- (1) The first question was asked with the head teachers, school teachers and the school supervisors. Their answer to the question varied and did not come in unanimous voice. Of the total respondents 16.66% gave positive answer and the remaining 83.34% expressed negatively.



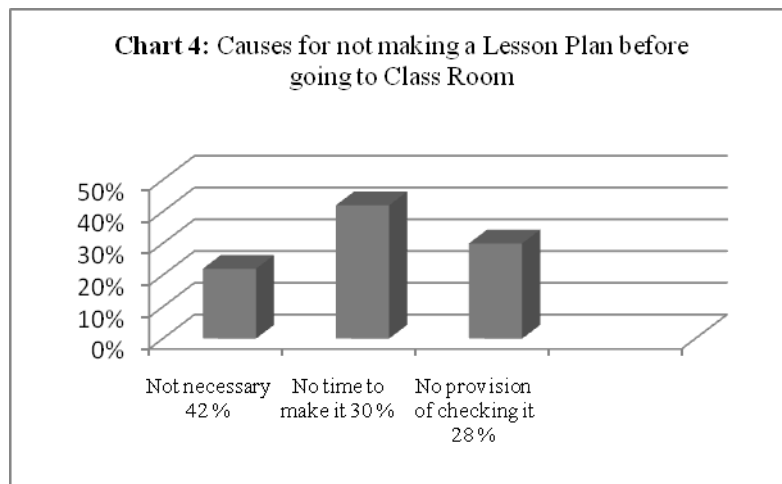
The respondents who provided negative answer expressed three causes for not making instructional planning to teach social studies. Those causes were unavailability of curriculum and teacher guide (29%), lack of training (43%) and lack of appropriate time to prepare instructional planning (28%).



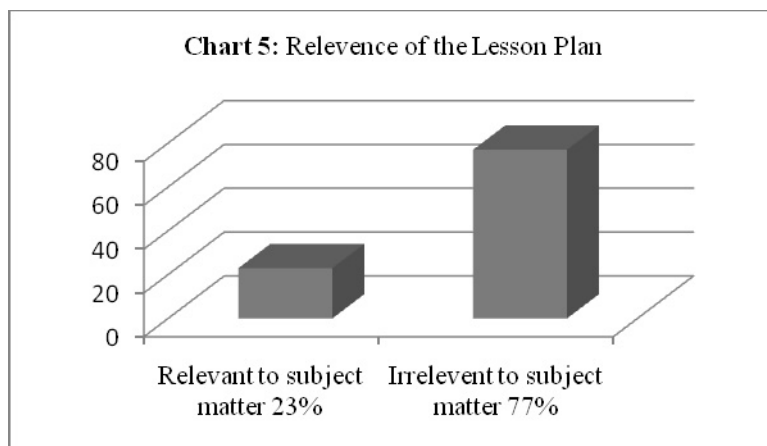
- (2) The second question was asked with the head teachers, subject teachers, school supervisors and the students. The respondents' perceptions were divided between- 23% positive answer and 77% negative answer. The following graph shows the responses of the respondents in both positive and negative forms.



In clarifying the causes for not making the lesson plan before entering the classroom 42% respondents felt that lesson plan was not necessary to teach social studies subject. Other 30% respondents had no time to make the lesson plan before going to school because they were quite busy for household chores. Similarly, the remaining 28% respondents remarked that there is no provision of lesson plan checking by any agencies or individuals for reward and punishment. According to them preparing, lesson plan before classroom teaching is a wastage of time. The reason for not making the lesson plan is shown by graph below:

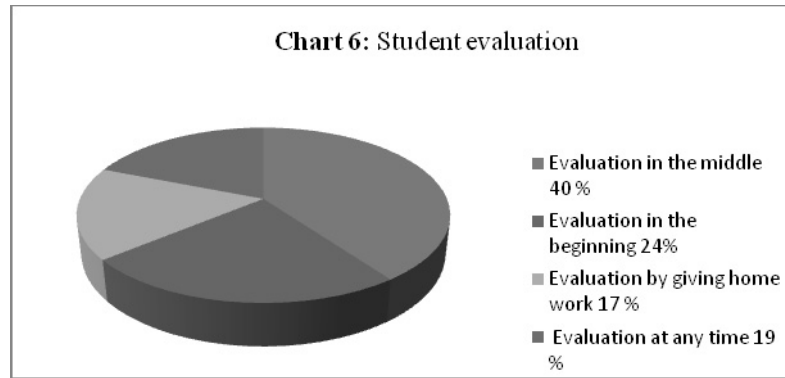


- (3) The respondents of the third question were head teachers, subject teachers and school supervisors. Among the respondents 23% answered that the teachers who prepared the lesson plan was relevant to subject matter and the remaining 77% answered that the lesson plan was irrelevant to subject matter. The following graph presents this in a different form.



The head teachers and the school supervisors were asked about the use of prepared lesson plan. In answering this question, 90 % respondents opined that the lesson plan was not properly used in classroom teaching. The remaining 10% respondents said that the lesson plan was properly used in class teaching.

- (4) The respondents of the question on relevance of teaching methods to the subject matter were students and head teachers. All the respondents answered that none of the social studies teachers taught by using a variety of teaching methods. All of them used lecture method in the classroom but when the inspection came from DEO, they used discussion and inquiry methods in classroom teaching for that day only.
- (5) The respondents of this question were students, head teachers and school supervisors. The answer to this question varied from respondents to respondents. A total of 40% respondents said that the evaluation of students' achievement was done in the middle of the teaching through group question. The other 24% answered that evaluation was done in the beginning of the class when the teacher entered into classroom. The teacher asked question to all students about the topic of previous class and some time, the teacher could ask the individual question by pointing to an individual student. The 17% of the respondents said that the evaluation was done by giving home work toward the last part of the class. Remaining 19% respondents opined that the evaluation is done by the teacher at any time during the class.



- (6) This was the last but not the least question of the study. In answering the question, the respondents expressed satisfaction about the physical condition of the schools. One of the schools near the urban area looked better in physical facilities. However, the others were not in bad condition. Both the institutions had physical facilities such as separate toilet for boys and girls, teachers and staffs. Facilities for drinking water with steel filters, canteen for tea and tiffin for the students and teachers and working staffs were also available. Both the institutions were fenced by bamboo wood and wall of stone and mud. The respondents however, could not point out any impact of the physical facilities on social studies teaching. Hence, they seemed to have this opinion that only attitude, knowledge, capacity and skill of the social studies teachers seems to be more subject teaching important than anything else.

PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING

The problems encountered in teaching social studies effectively are of two types: solvable and severe in nature. These problems were there from the very beginning of social development process. In this study, the problems are briefly presented in bullet form as following:

- Lack of qualified and trained subject teacher.
- Lack of instructional and reference materials.
- Some activities suggested in the books are more complicated than the subject contents.
- Insufficient training for teachers. Level wise curriculum of social studies is high ambitious in relation to age and level of the students.
- Lack of curriculum, teacher guide and instructional materials in schools.
- Subject matters related to rural life are little incorporated in social studies textbooks.
- Unnecessary activities are loaded in the text books in the name of subject matters.

- Insufficient supervision and monitoring from school administration and DEO.
- Lack of appropriate evaluation system of teachers and students.
- Some subject matters are of impractical nature.
- Less motivation is there among the teachers.
- Politicization of school education is rampant.
- There is less regard in society for social studies teachers, and
- Lecture method is dominant in social studies teaching.

REMEDIAL MEASURES

There are different types of problems- problems related to policy level to problems related to school administration, subject teachers, students, school management committee, DEO, school supervisors and problems related to curriculum and text books in social studies teaching. These problems, can be solved by concerned persons or agencies however, some may need rigorous discussion and effort among the concerned agencies, stakeholders and policy makers. Some may need further research before making policy and implementing them in practice. Remedial measures are to be taken according to the nature, cost and the intensity of the problems.

Existence of different kinds of problems is a natural phenomenon in all kinds of societies. Real hope and good intention to resolve these problems is necessary to move society forward. Social studies teaching is more relevant in modern age so as to understand the society and environment with international insight into these problems. Relevance of social studies education is growing but its effectiveness to be ensured and promoted.

As the time of today is that is the time of technology and communication responsible agencies like the Ministry of Education and the Universities have to be serious to resolve the existing problems by making an effort to look for new ground for the development of social studies education at the school level. Before introducing social studies subject in the curriculum in different levels of study, moral education had been taught to acquaint the students with the society and surrounding environment they live in. The commencing social studies subject replaced moral with an expectation that it will fulfilled the task of moral education also. In one side, many schools are searching for qualified social studies teachers but the number of social studies students in different levels of universities is decreasing annually on the other. Those students who have completed the respective level of study are also unemployed because of their orientation to social studies subjects. In this context, proper policy, plan and program are necessary to enhance the effectiveness of teaching social studies. To this a effect a comprehensive research as to how to make social studies an acceptable and important discipline of study is to be carried out through collaborative effort of the Ministry of Education and higher education institutions such as Tribhuvan University.

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