
Condition of Teaching Social Studies in Secondary Level

Binod Kumar Yadav

Department of Political Science, Tribhuvan University, Suryanarayan Satyanarayan Morbaita
Yadav Multiple Campus, Siraha

Email: binodyadav957@gmail.com

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to describe the condition of teaching social studies in secondary level, and identify the problems of it. Sampling of schools, teachers, head teachers and students was done purposefully. This paper has tried to analyze the use of teaching planning, use of teaching methods, availability of teaching materials, evaluation process, use of information and technology, situation of teachers of social studies of secondary level through interview and observation. Most of the studied schools were found suffering from the unavailability of teaching materials. Similarly, overcrowded classes, lack of desk-benches, lack of training for the teachers, teaching without lesson plan were the problems found in the study.

Keywords: social studies, condition, problem, solution, teaching

Introduction

Social Studies is the study of people living in the society. It studies the activities of people, social rites and rituals, religions and cultures, economic activities, natural resources, national and international relationship, geography, etc. So, social studies is a multi-disciplinary subject as Curriculum Development Center has combined subject matters from various areas and formed this subject.

The history of studying social studies started along with Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC), the first education commission of Nepal, developing a primary education curriculum and kept social studies as a separate subject in the primary education curriculum (NNEPC, 1956). Although social education was included in the curriculum of college of education in 2011 B.S., it was implemented in primary level in 2017 B.S. (Yadav, 2023). However, the subjects like history and geography were included in the curriculum of social studies in S.L.C. of 1990 B.S. (Kaiyum, 2068). Now, it is compulsory subject up to class 10, and optional in class 11 to 12 in school level of Nepal.

Teaching is the transformation of knowledge. Some people learn better by listening whereas others learn better by observing. Teachers use diverse methods to make students understand the subject matters. In other words, learning doesn't mean to repeat whatever teachers say, but it is to understand the subject matters and use it where ever it is necessary in real life. Teaching plan, time management, continuous activities, participation of students in classroom activities, evaluation,

and immediate feedback are necessary components. Activities done inside the classroom to teach the subject matters of curriculum of social studies and achieve the teaching objectives of this subject of any level and class are called teaching methods (Dhakal, 2070).

The report (CERID, 2005) mentioned that the contents of the social studies based on the experiences help young people to better understand and appreciate, and to practice, democratic relationships among mankind. Similarly, Dow (1979) concluded that direct observation, data gathering, and reading, role playing, constructing projects, and watching films are all excellent ways to provide students with new information. In the same way, Shah (2023) concludes that the lecture method is the more used method for the instruction of social studies.

Acharya (2004) studied about availability and uses of materials while teaching social studies of secondary level. He studied in 24 community schools of Banke district. He had interviewed headmasters, subject teachers and students of the selected schools. Even he had observed the classroom teaching of many teachers. From this study, the problems like lack of teaching materials not only in school but also in local market, untrained teachers, etc. were revealed.

The main objective of carrying out this study is to identify the condition of teaching social studies in secondary level in Nepal. Specifically, problems seen while teaching the social studies in secondary level, and their possible solutions are discussed in this study.

Methodology

This study was done in five community secondary schools of Kalyanpur municipality of Siraha district, Nepal. Considering time and resources, Head teachers and social study subject teachers of each schools, and two students from each school were purposefully selected. Unstructured interview and classroom observation were used as tools for data collection. Both primary and secondary resources were used in this study. Information was collected from primary sources like students, subject teachers and head teachers of the selected schools. Information was also collected through classroom observation. Similarly, newspapers, books, theses, records of the schools, teachers' manuals, etc. were the secondary sources used to carry out this study.

Result and Discussion

Condition of Teaching Social Studies in Secondary Level

As social studies is a multidisciplinary subject. In the selected schools, most of the students accepted that they like social studies except some parts i.e. geography and history. As the subject matters are related to society i.e. cultures, civic consciousness, infrastructure of development, social problems and solution, they liked those subject matters. However, they didn't like history and geography because they have to learn the past events in history and there are diverse subject matters included in geography which they think is beyond their learning capacity.

Teacher have to use diverse teaching methods on the basis of subject matters to make students understand them. Teachers use various methods like discussion, group work, exhibition, lecture, question-answer, observation tour, etc. on the basis of need, but lecture method is preferred by most of the time by all most teachers especially while teaching the subjects like social studies. In other words, teacher centered methods are more preferred mostly in the community schools. They also use various teaching materials like maps, atlas, charts, and even newspapers while teaching. It is revealed that students are taken for the field observation very less. It is also known from the observation and discussion that many teachers feel bore to use the teaching materials like maps, globe, charts, etc. that are available in the schools. Making available of textbooks at the beginning of the session is also found to be one of the challenge faced by the schools. Similarly, there was also seen the problems like unavailability of teachers manual and references books in the school.

However, teachers suffer from the unavailability of teaching materials during their teaching. In this shortage of teaching materials and class with maximum number of students, teachers are somehow managing their classes. Teachers are unable to follow the annual work plan in the schools. They also accept that they are unable to make preparation of the subject matters before they enter the classroom because of the heavy work load. One of the difficulty is also created due the change of education policy and curriculum at the middle of the session.

In many schools, the mechanism of discussing about the problems faced by the teachers and students during teaching/learning activities in the classroom. During the classroom observation, it was found that the seat arrangement of students was good in many schools. Similarly, some schools were trying to teach students about events, cultures, rites and rituals through observation tour. It is also found that classwork and homework were partially evaluated in most of the schools.

During the class observation, most of the teachers were found to have entered the classroom without lesson plan of what to teach. Many of them just make recalling of previous subject matters taught by asking questions at the beginning of the period. Then they start lecturing the students. Standing at the front of the class,

they go on explaining about the subject matters to the students. Mostly, teachers were found to have used lecture method of teaching. Students were made very less activities in the class in the form of classwork. Very few teachers were seen asking the questions after they lecture to know about either their students have understood what they said/taught or not. In other words, many teachers don't evaluate the students at the end of their class. In the same way, many teachers didn't give homework to the students in the observed class. This is to say, social studies class of most of the teachers that are observed are not in the planned order following the patterns of teaching.

The above scenario shows that teaching/learning of social studies has become a challenge for the both teachers and students. In the shortage of materials and having heavy work load, teachers are somehow managing their classes. Maybe, due to not being trained, teachers are not habituated to enter the classroom with complete teaching plan of their subject matters. What they do is just enter the classroom, lecture the students and end up the class. This way of teaching has shown something missing in the way of teaching social studies in the classroom.

Problems of Teaching Social Studies in Secondary Level

Many problems were seen during this study. While discussing with the students, subject teachers and head teachers, they pointed out many problems regarding the teaching/learning of social studies. Lack of teaching materials, books don't reach to the students on time at the beginning of the session, unable to follow annual work plan in teaching, way of teaching isn't suitable as per the nature of the lesson, classes are overcrowded, teaching without planning or lacking lesson plan, lecture method is more prioritized, no enough budget for buying teaching materials, and lack of training, seminar and workshops for the teachers in particular subject were the problems identified.

Most of the schools selected for the study accepted that they don't have enough teaching materials to teach social studies. According to social studies teachers, social studies subject is a bulky subject which requires variety of teaching materials. However, school administration is unable to provide those teaching materials. In this regard, one of the social studies teacher said, "School administration can't provide enough materials as required in the subject". Similarly, they also said that they don't have enough time to prepare teaching materials because they have to teach 5 to 6 periods a day. Head teachers of most of the schools selected for this study accepted that they are unable to buy the necessary teaching materials required to teach social studies. Regarding this, one of the head teachers involved this study said,

"Diverse teaching materials are needed to teach social studies as it has diverse subject matters. However, we are unable to buy those teaching

materials because government hasn't provided us to buy those materials. We also don't have any other sources to make it available."

Along with the lack of budget to buy teaching materials, head teachers also accepted that the teachers have heavy work load in the schools. The reason behind allocating more periods for the teachers is not having enough teachers in the school. In this regard, one of the head teachers involved in this study said, "We don't enough teachers in the school so that we have to allocate more periods for the teachers. That's why there is more working load for them." Similarly, there is also the problem in teaching due to lack of expert teachers as this subject includes varieties of subject matters like history, geography, civil consciousness, economic activities, etc. Regarding this, one of the head teacher participated in this study said, "There are no teachers who have studied social studies as the major subject so that available teachers don't have enough knowledge required for teaching this subject." This lack of knowledge directly affects in teaching/learning activities in the class.

Teachers don't prepare the lesson plan before they go to their class. In other words, there is no tradition of making lesson plan before going to the class so that they can't prepare the teaching materials. This creates problem in delivering method of teachers and understanding way of the students. On the other hand, teachers are preferring lecture as the method of teaching social studies mostly in the classroom. This also has created boredom in students. In this regard, one of the students involved in this study said, "Our teachers must have used discussion, exhibition, problem solving, acting, making observation, etc. methods to make our understanding better, but we only listen the lectures of the teachers most of the time of almost periods of social studies."

Each class was observed in selected schools from class 8 to 10 two times. In the observation as well, teachers normally entered the classroom, wrote the topic to be taught and started lecturing on it. Many teachers started their class with recalling about what they taught in the earlier periods of that subject. Then they continued lecturing the students. Even teachers didn't evaluate either the students understood about the subject matters they taught or not. Many teachers didn't give homework as well. This repeated trends show that the teachers are not well trained about how to teach the subject matters of social studies effectively in the classroom. Similarly, problem in delivering method is also seen in the teachers. This may be the reason that teachers are not well known about how to deliver what sorts of subject matters in better manner. This revealed the need of timely teachers' training, seminar and workshops. Similarly, teachers entering the class with just textbooks or just very few teaching materials showed either lack of teaching materials or negligence of teachers in using available teaching materials. After entering the class, many teachers were found to have stood just at the front of the class lecturing. In other words, teachers don't move around the class either due lack of walking space as the class is overcrowded or just they have habit of lecturing just from the

front. However, some of classes were well managed. They were spacious so that teachers used to move among the students while teaching. Seats of the students were also well managed in those classes.

Above all discussions show that there is problem of teaching materials for teaching social studies in most of the schools selected for this study. Teachers don't get time to prepare their teaching materials because of having heavy work load. As a result, teachers have to teach for five/six periods a day. In the same way, the teachers available for this subject don't have enough knowledge required for teaching this subject as they didn't study all the subject matters included in this subject in the university level.

Solutions of Teaching Social Studies in Secondary Level

Most of the students participated in this study want to be taught using problem solving method, observation, exhibition, site visit, etc. rather than listening to the lecture of teachers. They also want their teachers use audio/audio-visual materials, on the basis of the nature of the subject matters. Regarding this, one of the students participated in this study said, "We want our teachers use varieties of teaching methods during the class. Also we want them use varieties of audio/audio-video materials on the basis of the nature of the subject matters".

Students also suggested for the practical activities and field visit. Field observation helps students look and understand culture and way of living of people of particular place.

As like students, teachers also expressed varieties of ways for solving these problems. Firstly, they want management of teaching materials, reference books, etc. in their schools. Secondly, they suggested for timely management of required training, seminar and workshops. Thirdly, classrooms should not be overcrowded with students. Fourthly, textbooks should be made available in school on time at the beginning of the session. Finally, there should be enough furniture like desks, benches, white boards, etc. required for the students. In this regard, one of the teacher said, "To make classroom teaching effective in this subject, there should be the management of necessary teaching materials and furniture."

Head teachers involved in this study also have given many suggestions. Firstly, they have suggested the concerned authority to manage the teachers as per the need. Secondly, they suggested to make stability in the education policy. Thirdly, they suggested for the management of service training for the teachers. Fourthly, they requested government to provide textbooks on time i.e. at the beginning of the session. Finally, they suggested teachers to teach the subject matters making the lesson plan and using the available teaching materials.

From the above discussion, problem of teaching materials is one of the serious problem affecting the teaching/learning activities of social studies. If

teachers try to use audio-visual materials during their teaching on the basis of the subject matters, this will facilitate more in the teaching/learning activities. Similarly, there should be the mechanism of managing the teachers of social studies i.e. teachers having knowledge of required subject matters. In the same way, taking students for field visit is also another way to make students understand the rites and rituals, cultures, way of living, etc. in better manner. Moreover, concerned authority should be aware about the problems that are likely to occur during the teaching/learning activities of social studies. They should timely discuss with concerned students, teachers and other stakeholders, and find out the problems and solve them. Then only the teaching/learning activities of social studies can be effective in the classroom.

Classroom observation shows that there is need of using other methods of teaching along with lecture to make students understand better. Similarly, teachers have to use teaching materials available in the school as far as possible. Another most important thing that teachers need to do is to make plan of the subject matter before they enter the classroom. Similarly, starting the class with recalling the subject matters those were taught in the previous class is the good way of engaging the students in the learning. Teachers also have to engage students in the activities and evaluate their performance during the class. In the same way, necessary homework has to be given to the students. To make teachers do these activities, teachers should be provided timely training by the concerned authority. Similarly, seminars and workshops also can be organized on the basis of need for the concerned teachers. Then only, we can expect the better teaching/learning activities in social studies.

Conclusion

From the study of the condition of teaching social studies in secondary level in Kalyanpur Municipality, Siraha many realities have been revealed. Teacher centered method of teaching i.e. lecture method is the most used way of teaching. Similarly, there is also problem in using teaching materials. The materials which are available in the schools even are also not used. This represent the real condition of teachers. So, there seems the necessity of timely training, seminar and workshops centering to this subject. Class with large number of students, less furniture like desks and benches, unwell seat arrangement, etc. are other problematic conditions seen. In the same way, less preparation before teaching by teachers due to various reasons are other conditions seen during the study i.e. while discussing with the selected population and observing the class. Discussion among concerned stakeholders is also going on there. This indicates that in some way steps for solving problems are also taken. If all the stakeholders present themselves seriously in the discussion, sooner or later, problem will be solved. It will be better for the schools and students if more serious issues i.e. related to students' learning and teachers' development are addressed on time.

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