



Community Resources for the Development of Social Studies Curriculum in Nigeria

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Abstract

The practice of any school curriculum entails the embracing of every available resource that can enhance teaching and learning effectively. Social Studies Education by its nature of having contact with the physical, social and economic environment stands a better opportunity of tapping into the resources found around schools and their immediate communities. Be that as it may, it has been observed that this quest has not been fully actualized by those concerned thereby, contributing to the failure of meeting set goals in this area of study. This study however, takes a look at the role of community resources in teaching and learning and the underlying challenges in the effective application of these community resources in the development of Social Studies curriculum. For a better description of how these community resources can enhance effective understanding of Social Studies curriculum content, the work also gives illustrations on how these community resources can be incorporated in the teaching and learning of Social Studies concepts.

Keywords: Community resources; Development; Social studies education; Teaching; Learning.



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1. Introduction

The essence of community resources in the development of man cannot be overstressed. What is perceived to be community resources form viable curriculum to the educational system and the development of a learner and the society as a whole. The society is shrouded by problems and the people that make up such society are not exempted in this said problem bedeviling the society. These problems get better comprehended and effective and workable solution delivered when they are enshrined in schools' curricula and necessary measures put in place for their management. Having a direct contact with these problems in our communities and proffering solution with the aid of resources found around same communities make learning more interesting and enjoyable. In this sense then, the community serves the function of a laboratory to the teacher and the learner. Information bothering on socio-economic and political activities are available in our communities if sourced effectively because at this point they come in handy and tangible for a better examination and application to different areas of study and life experiences.

The school cannot do without the community and vice versa. It is from the community the school is able to source its materials because it is the community that schools' curricula are designed for. Schools' curricula must have impact on the community in every ramification. Whatever change that is occurring in the different sectors of the society must also be felt in every community hence, the need for a better relationship between the schools and the community. Social studies by its nature is an area of study that encompasses everything about man and his social, economic, physical and political environment. There must be a direct interaction with every deposit found around these places mentioned so as to establish a relationship in the long run. The community becomes very handy in this quest.

There are different sources of Social Studies curriculum content of which the community is one of them. The community as a laboratory to the Social Studies practitioners will offer valuable resources that can make a learner obtain first hand information of what is being taught in class. While here, the learners are exposed to the opportunity of having direct contact with the people and to understand the activities they are involved in and how these activities in turn, affect man's ways of life. This is what forms the scope and nature of Social Studies Education. In giving credence to the relationship existing between the school and the community, (Miranda, 1983) states that 'communities consciously or unconsciously, depend on schools to maintain some consistency in a rapidly changing society.' In the view of Mezieobi (2013);

The social sensitivity nature of social studies does not presume that Social Studies curriculum planning must only reflect the current or existing societal realities, needs, aspirations and

problems... planning should be futuristic in terms of forecasting a curriculum that may suit future trends and practices or be responsive to it rather than a curriculum that is restricted to new conditions only.

The question of how many teachers and learners get exposed to understanding the role of these community resources in the development of Social Studies Education curriculum arises as the main concern of this work.

2. Concepts Clarification

2.1. Community Resources

The concept of community resources by its nature, bears diverse meanings depending on the context of usage. Community resources like material resources are materials found in the natural world that have practical use and value for humans (material resources: definition and uses). [Mezieobi et al. \(2015\)](#), define community resources as 'those persons, places and institutions which desirably enrich social studies teaching and learning, deepen the social studies content and widen the horizon of the social studies students.'

The establishment of effective teaching partly rests on the immediate community which [Kochhar \(2006\)](#) provides "is a wonderful curriculum laboratory which can provide extremely dynamic, interesting and real life opportunities for learning." Similarly [Johnson \(2015\)](#) in buttressing the importance of community resources to the school and vice versa stresses that;

Naturally then, it is impossible to consider the value of community resources to the school without taking into account the value of school activities to the community. It is necessary however; that the school shall be ever conscious of the changing needs of the community. It must be always on the alert to find ways in which the needs of the children can be best served by projects which will also broaden their horizon to include the community [p.1].

The formation of interdisciplinary units such as social studies education can be fully and meaningfully actualized when the contents of the community are religiously embraced. No curriculum exists outside what is obtained in its immediate community. The geographical, social, economic and political backgrounds of such communities do not matter when it comes to deriving resources from them. These resources are there to further help learners familiarize with their environment and help manage issues bothering on such community. What goes on in the community should form the content of the curriculum for better understanding of the relevance of the community to school activities and vice versa.

The experiences learners gather from the contents of the community are capable of granting learners unique experiences in their real-life activities. Social problems become concrete as we investigate them in our own communities. Thus, the community provides concrete data on cultural, industrial, political and geographical facts and relationship ([Kochhar, 2006](#)). The resources found within the communities in terms of persons, places and institutions as provided by [Mezieobi et al. \(2015\)](#) are;

Capable of appealing to learners' senses of seeing, hearing and feeling. They come in tangible forms and help make learning, feeling. They come in tangible forms and help make learning more enjoyable. This way of learning from the community resources make learning appear real before the learners [p.173].

Community resources serving as laboratories for learning in the school simply create room for learners to associate areas of their subject to what is being practiced in the community. This further helps learners identify and appreciate the interrelatedness found in their school subject and what is obtained from the community. The events recorded from trips to the community become 'common knowledge' of the class and can be referred to in subsequent lessons. What was learned is thus, reinforced and extended in later discussions as the teacher refers to field observations' ([Using community Resources, 1996](#)).

2.2. The Concept of Social Studies Curriculum

Curriculum according to [Esu et al. \(2016\)](#) is grouped into four distinct areas that provide an encompassing definition. According to these authors, curriculum as the content and knowledge in school is perceived from the angle of stating that it is "all the aggregate of course of study in the school or as all the particular course of study in school or college."

The authors equally view curriculum 'as discipline or subject. In relating to Bruner's as cited in [Esu et al. \(2016\)](#) submission 'there is the necessity of studying a particular discipline or subject on its own in order to gain mastery of it.' This simply positions the curriculum to be that which embraces all a learner is expected to know as regard a particular subject/discipline. There must be a true comprehension of what the subject/discipline is all about.

The foregoing simply implies that curriculum entails 'all the learning experiences.' According to the authors, this definition falls in line with the works of the Progressivists and Reconstructionists. They posit that the early curriculum experts like Dewey, Stratemeyer and Tyler 'have expressed in their different articles the necessity of relating the content of the school curriculum to needs, interests and experiences of the learner as well as the needs and values of the society.' Caswell and Campbell as cited in [Esu et al. \(2016\)](#) state that curriculum is 'all the experience children have under the guidance of teachers.' And in the case of Daga and Bishop as cited in [Esu et al. \(2016\)](#) it is 'all the learning experiences that are planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried out in group or individually, inside or outside of the schools.'

In conceptualizing curriculum, these same authors state that it is conceived 'as school experience and culture. According to the authors, in making reference to Dewey and others, 'curriculum is the totality of what educational

system tries to do in order to achieve predetermined objectives or some intended outcome.' Specific reference is made to Whitefield's definition as cited in [Esu et al. \(2016\)](#) that curriculum is a 'selection from culture which embraces way of life, certain kinds of knowledge, certain attitudes and values regarded as so important that their transmission to the next generation is not left to chance.' This definition clearly describes the relationship that exists between the people's culture and the curriculum content. There is no separation of both. The people's ways' of life must be enshrined in the schools' curricula so as to provide better understanding of every pressing and competing need and aspirations of the people representing such culture. This way, better measures to redressing such issues are learnt and solutions proffered in the long run. This is the essence of education.

The foregoing gives a vivid understanding of what every school curriculum entails irrespective of where it is situated. Onwuka cited in [Esu et al. \(2016\)](#) states that curriculum development and curriculum planning are generally used interchangeably. However, curriculum development has been explicated as the evolution of new materials and methods of presentation to ensure effective learning as well as ways of evaluating the process to ensure that the specific learning has taken place.' In the bid to differentiating curriculum development and curriculum planning, Onwuka further as cited in [Esu et al. \(2016\)](#) states that 'curriculum planning is more encapsulating than curriculum development. It involves assessing the outcome and re-planning redevelopment and appraisal.' In essence, curriculum development suggests the production of a plan for a discipline and should contain the aims and objectives of such discipline. The materials and resources needed are also considered here while planning so as to meet the objectives of this area of discipline. The methods of presentation of instruction are equally embraced in the process so as to ensure effective teaching and learning processes.

The foregoing clearly expresses the importance of a curriculum. No school system can thrive without putting in place an effective and implementable curriculum that aims at producing a well-grounded citizen.

2.3. Social Studies and Curriculum Development

[Mezieobi \(2013\)](#), testifies that no conception of Social Studies curriculum enjoys universal acceptance and applicability. This implies that every country designs its conception of Social studies curriculum based on its needs and aspirations hence, the differences in major parts of all curricula of Social Studies the world over. The author in emphasizing the need for a proper curriculum development states that, 'Nigeria is a multi-cultural society. Given the nature of Social Studies curriculum which must sensitize its nature to the culture and the community or environment in which the schools are situated, curriculum development in Social Studies entails a high degree of decentralization.' (p.62). This statement further gives better understanding to the teaching and learning of Social Studies which is all embracing. It is expected to extract its teaching and learning materials from within and outside the school environment.

Social studies by its nature is required for the overall development of citizens of a country. It is an area of study that encompasses almost every part of what makes up a society. It is action-based and requires the application of every available resource that can promote better understanding of its objective.

Social Studies as a social science discipline adopts scientific methods in its investigations and embracing these methods will employ every real life experiences that can be sourced from the students' immediate surrounding which is the community. Students are familiar with these instructional materials found around the community. The materials are down-to-earth and help to make learning more enjoyable, easier, long-lasting, explorative, curiosity-bound and others.

2.4. The Application of Community Resources in Teaching Social Studies

Community resources according to [Umar \(2016\)](#) include;

Unconventional sites such as the tile factory or a hardware store, fabric store, farm or ranch. While extended field trips can be rewarding, short school yard trips can be equally valuable. These allow students to discover answers for themselves in a familiar context. Whether your school is urban, suburban, or rural, it reflects the habitat of its neighborhood, such as the hard-topped surfaces, the soils, grasses, and trees, the weather, vehicles, motorbikes and so on.

Community resources can come in the forms of both written and non-written materials. 'Short trips to the school yard if employed, on a regular basis can become an integral part of learning and foster students' understanding of the natural world and increase their sophistication in observing and interpreting their surroundings' [Akinfe., & Fashiko in Umar \(2016\)](#).

Social Studies Education is an area that undertakes the study of man and his environment therefore its learning process must embrace a judicious contact with the content of the physical environment (outside the classroom). Making field trip a regular exercise must be encouraged to further enhance students' understanding of their physical environment. By doing so, learning and understanding issues surrounding their environment are brought closer to them and better ways of managing them are discovered in the process. Community resources are deposited in the people found in the community in question, institutions and the various sites to be visited by the learners and their teachers.

Community resources as stated by [Kochhar \(2006\)](#) 'is the responsibility of the teacher to investigate the community particularly those resources which seem to identify themselves with clear-cut and full understanding of social experiences.' Community resources abound and come in different forms which bear different looks, functions and approaches depending on the community where they are found. Also to be considered in the choice of resources here is the fact that what obtains in the rural area may be different from those observed from the urban area. According to [Kochhar \(2006\)](#), community resources can be sourced from:

Geographical interest- These are resources that are found around the environment. They are deposits located within the reach of man. The contents found here enable man understudy a place and understand how it affects man's existence. The connectivity between the school and the community cannot be overemphasized especially, in the development of a school curriculum. Reference to this, is drawn from [Esu *et al.* \(2016\)](#) where they state that 'the nature of society must be considered by the planner/developer; its felt needs, goals, aspirations, values and value systems, beliefs, social structure, expectation and general way of life.' Resources found here are waterfalls, river, sea ports, hills, zoos, mines, rocks, housing, farmland, road construction sites, rocks, lakes, mountains, dams, fossils, forests, valleys, bridges, and others.

Historical interest- Community resources can also be sourced from historical sites where material culture is stored. The objects and sites found are capable of linking man to his future and mistakes of the past redressed for the avoidance of a repeat case. Examples of objects found under this are majorly the remains of man's civilization. They are monuments, places of worship, pillars, forts, bridges, caves, regalia, ornaments, museums, excavation sites, pot sheds, art works and others.

Economic interest- resources that bother on these are meant to reveal man's ways of eking out a living within his given available resources. examples are drawn from industries, printing press, post offices, cottage and modern industries, banks, markets, insurance offices, stock markets, retail and wholesale shops, means of exchange, and others.

Cultural interest- This aspect of sourcing resources from the community can be done by getting in contact with the people's customs and traditions and the measures adopted in sustaining them and how they have negatively or positively impacted on man's existence. The societal value system emphasizes its preservation and it is a discipline such as Social Studies Education that can promote this as it forms part of its objectives.

Examples of this can be derived from instructing students to observe how different groups of people eat/dress/greet/manage disputes and how they express their values, attitude and behaviour towards events around them. They can also be made to watch some festivals that are observed in such communities at different seasons and note down their observations of how they are done and the essence of such festivals to human and societal development.

Political interest- This can be done by exposing learners to offices of the three arms and tiers of government situated in different parts of the country. Direct contact with the communities' administrative system should equally be encouraged in this case. Methods of resolving conflict are also exposed to learners under this area. Town halls can be visited and learners at this point can be shown the sitting arrangement of chiefs, elders and community members during certain meetings.

Scientific interest- the community around this area bothers on those that can aid students in developing a sense of inquiry and being critical in their thinking and reasoning through the experimentation of what they find around them. There is need for learners to have a better understanding of how natural phenomenon works. This can be done through visits to power generation/transmission and distribution offices, space centers, airports, factories, bakeries, broadcasting centers, soil-type/functions and usages, industries, electrical installation sites, welding shops, medical centers and others.

2.5. Importance of Community Resources to Social Studies Education

The protection and preservation of natural resources deposited in communities do not only rest within the ambit of soil or natural habitat but also involves their usage as instructional materials to learners. There is need to arrest the interest of the children as custodians of their culture which cuts across their customs, traditions and resources found around their communities. What is known as a community is not only restricted to the rural but also the urban areas. This is a setting man has designed to carry out his activities derived from an age long practice of his people which undoubtedly requires sustenance in generations to come.

[Kochhar \(2006\)](#), opines that 'to achieve the purpose of Social Studies, the child must become a real part of the community in which he lives, interact with it and contribute to it.' This clearly fits into Uche's submission in [Akinola \(2014\)](#). According to the author, 'citizenship education is to prepare a child for social responsibility which covers; to develop in the learner a positive attitude to citizenship and the desire to make a positive personal contribution towards the realization of one Nigeria.'

Social Studies lays emphasis on the development of responsible members of the country. This [Kochhar \(2006\)](#) further reiterates that, 'a variety of community experiences offer the child the laboratory in which he may experiment with life in the community and begin to find his place in it.' Community resources are equally important in the development of social studies curriculum because it 'gives children an opportunity to observe and sometimes to participate in the basic human activities that characterize living in a social group' ([Kochhar, 2006](#)). In curriculum development of any given discipline, the learner is embraced as one of the essential elements. The learner and human activities in the environment vary and one's ability to have access to these activities further stretches one to obtain a clearer understanding of one's needs and interests and walk towards meeting them. According to [Burstin and Knotts \(2011\)](#), students 'incorporating their likes and dislikes from outside the classroom into the content helps increase the motivation of students to apply themselves to the task at hand.'

Social Studies curriculum is not ignorant of this knowing that the generality of the discipline is to help man understand his nature and the environment (physical, economic, political and social) he has found himself. Summing this up is the statement from [Esu *et al.* \(2016\)](#) where it is opined that 'the planner must also take the changing nature of children into account if the curriculum is to be responsive.'

2.6. Challenges in the Effective Application of Community Resources in the Development of Social Studies Curriculum

There are underlying challenges bothering on the effective application of community resources in the development of Social Studies curriculum content.

- Limited utilization of available community resource persons. Community resource persons are basically drawn from the community to help supply information to the relevant authorities for the proper development of Social Studies curriculum content. Community resources are deposited in the people found in the community in question, institutions and the various sites to be visited by the learners and their teachers. Not including them in the process defeats the essence of the introduction of Social Studies in the education system.
- Refusal to accept that the classroom is a limited environment for effective teaching and learning processes is another challenge being encountered in the development of community resources. This further hampers the need for emphasis on the use of community resources by the relevant bodies.
- Volatility of some communities remains a challenge to assessing available community resources. This clearly inhibits easy access to relevant information by curriculum developers. Teachers can also be relied upon in the development of schools' curricula through the information they are able to retrieve from field trips to such communities but, they prefer to remain in their classrooms for fear of not being harrassed when they embark on such trips.
- Non availability of funds for field trips. Some schools do not make available the necessary requirements for field trips hence the refusal of teachers to carry out such assignment. Non-visits to the communities in question can amount to distorted information being passed down to the teachers, learners and curriculum developers who may want to depend on these elements for the development of the curriculum.
- Uninterested or indifferent nature of some teachers and curriculum developers is equally a challenge faced in the development of Social Studies curriculum. For such resource persons, even when the relevant organisations make such funds available would not want to attempt it due to their state of mind. Sithole (2010) cited in Umar (2016) in reiterating this states that 'teachers hardly use local resources such as national objects in the classes.'

2.7. The Role of Community Resources in the Development of Social Studies Curriculum

In developing Social Studies Education curriculum, the systematic approach to curriculum development should be adopted. (Esu *et al.*, 2016) posit that in analyzing challenges facing the educational sector curriculum developers would want to consider an analysis of ;

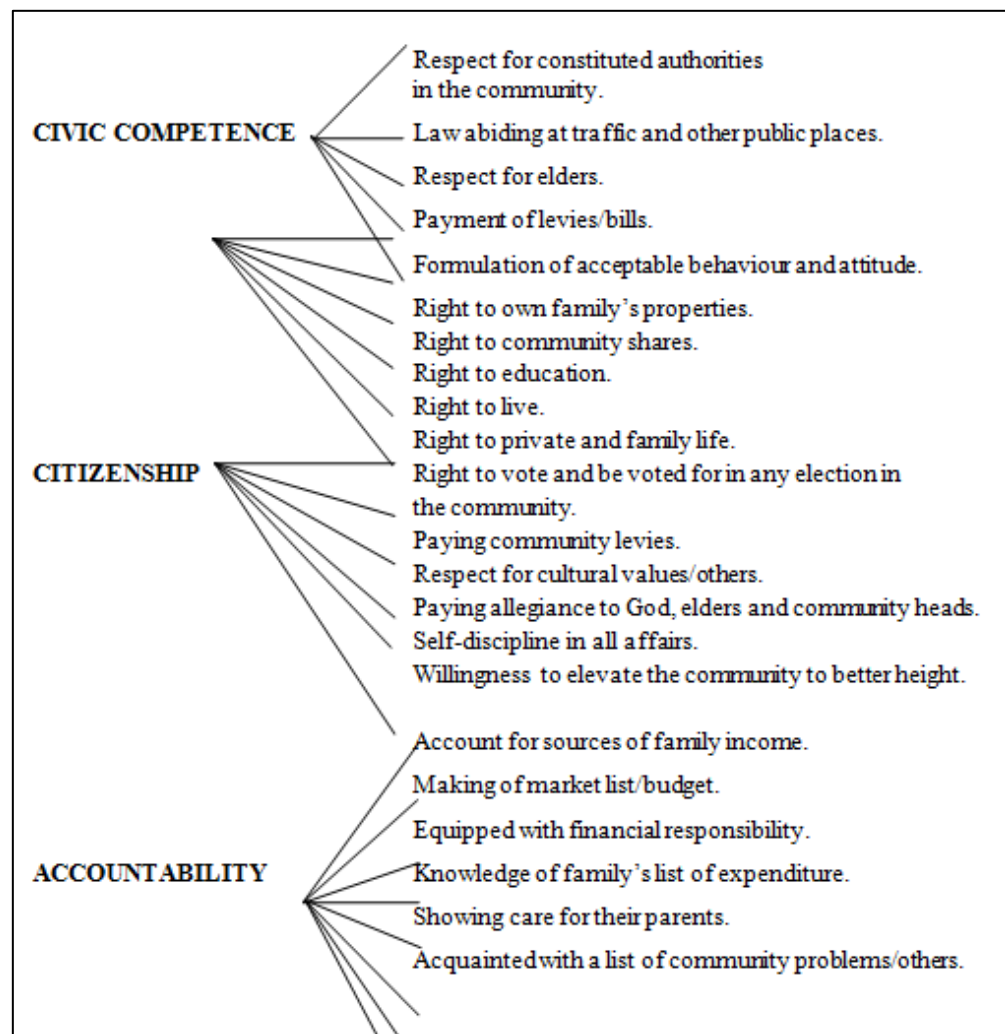
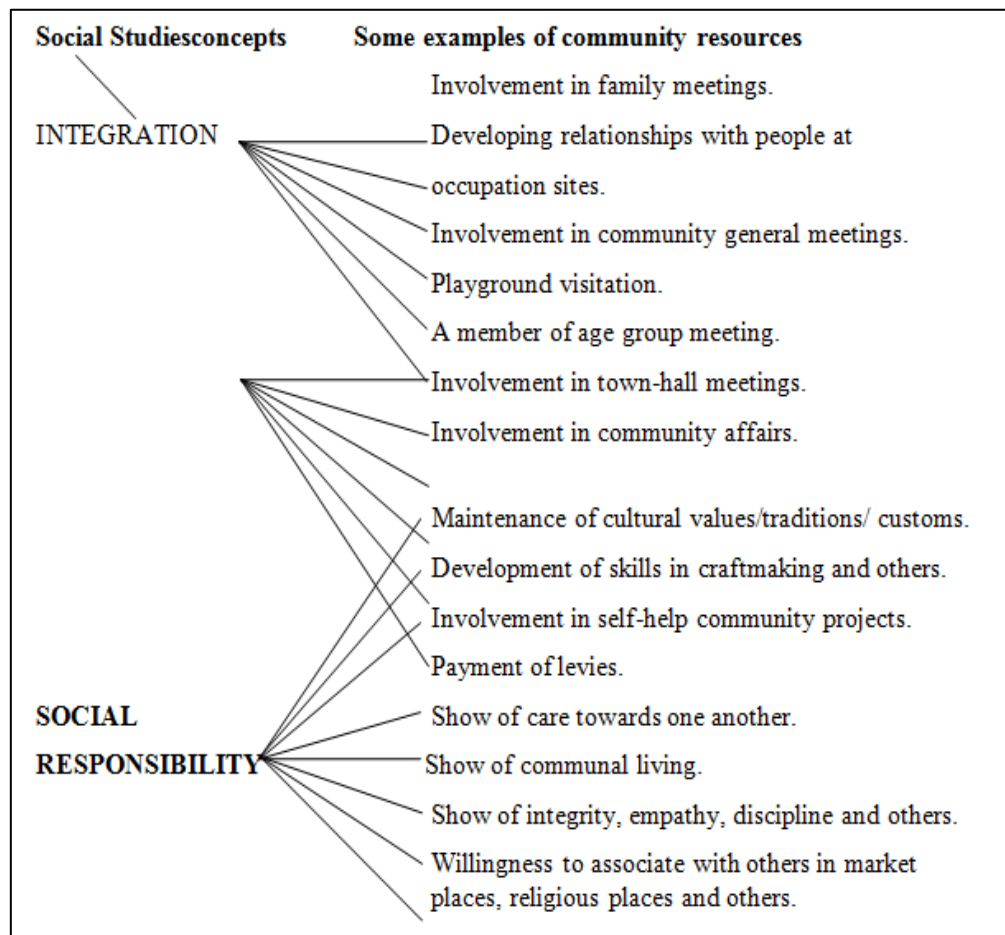
the prevailing situation; the line of action that should be taken; and a determination of the procedure for handling the problem situation, the impact assessment of the situation, the anticipated and unanticipated problems and their possible solution.' This approach clearly falls within the ambit of tackling some of the challenges Social Studies curriculum is encountering at present [p.18].

All the visible areas captured above by Esu *et al.* (2016) are not devoid of the application of the content of the community. The prevailing situation of things in the society at large must be taken into consideration so as to help the developers have a better understanding of the causes of the problems/challenges being encountered and proffer realistic and achievable solution to the said-problem/challenges facing the effective development the curriculum content. No curriculum can be developed outside the adoption of the relevance of the people's needs. Learners can understand societal problems and events better when they are granted the opportunity of having a one-on-one contact with those events. Kochhar (2006), emphasizes this better where it is stated that;

There are so many community problems which constitute the subject-matter of Social Studies. Traffic problems, protection of public property, community beautification, conservation and law observance are but a few to which children can actually make a contribution appropriate to their level of development. A problem shared builds interest, concern and a feeling of kinship. The principle works well when pupils and community are thrown together in the consideration of vital problems. Pupils develop a sense of belonging and the community is benefitted because of the sense of responsibility developed in the pupils [p.215].

The following are various ways community resources can further aid the effective development of Social Studies Education curriculum content.

2.8. An Illustration of the Incorporation of Community Resources in Achieving some Objectives of Social Studies Concepts



The foregoing gives a clear description of the extent to which community resources can be integrated into Social Studies Education curriculum. It is purely an activity that entails the movement of both ends [the school and the community] from one point to the other and vice versa. According to Kochhar (2006), in taking the school to the community, the school would engage the students in field trips, community survey and school camping. In addition to this, schools can contract the services of tourist assistants. Accommodation, funds and other essential items are also expected on the list depending on the number of days would be spent on the field.

On the contrary, the author advises that transporting the community to the school would entail the invitation of community resource persons, involvement of parents/teachers associations, social service activities, celebration of fairs, festivals and national days. In furtherance of this, is the submission by Edinyang and Unimke (2014) where they state that 'observation is rooted in human ability to examine, see, notice and carefully through the sense with seen understanding of emerging event or phenomena.' This statement aligns with the importance of exposing students to real life experiences which can be obtained from available community resources. Giving confidence to this is where the authors opine that, 'the informal Social Studies curriculum requires the use of community resources to a larger extent in order to balance up the expectation of the formal Social Studies curriculum.'

A proper utilization of the above-mentioned is capable of promoting a long lasting memory in the lives of the learners. To further buttress this, the authors state that 'the emotions of children are most easily reached not by words but by sights and sounds. It is actually when they see the things that they remember them' [p.216].

3. Conclusion

The objectives of Social Studies Education at all levels lay emphasis on the production of effective, responsible and democratic citizens. These emphases can only be accomplished when learners and social educators walk along the path of absorbing the relevant resources found within and outside their communities.

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