



## Team Teaching as an Innovative Teaching Method and Its Impact on Social Studies Education in Nigeria

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**Abstract**— *The basic objective of this paper is to critically examine the concept of team teaching and its impact in the social studies education in Nigeria. It argues that the nature of social studies as an integrated discipline makes it imperative that teams of teachers with special competencies be made responsible for teaching its various aspects to make the subject more meaningful and functional. This paper also examined the features of team teaching, implementation strategies for effective team teaching. It observed the merits and demerits of team teaching. The paper tends to agree with the few authors who observed the short-comings of team teaching, and is of the view that its merits and supports prove its worth beyond all reasonable doubt. Finally, the writer expresses optimism that with careful planning and organization of material; together with commitment and cooperation among all team members, team teaching will have great impact on the social studies classroom and will make a breakthrough in the teaching and understanding of social studies education in the nation's school system.*

**Keywords:** *Team teaching, Teaching method, Social studies education.*

## 1. Introduction

Recent global issues calls for teaching techniques that will make teaching and learning less complicated to learners and educators. Social studies education involves, the gathering of information needed for the survival of the society and the broadening of students perspectives which has to be translated through various instructional strategies. The nature of social studies as an integrated discipline makes it imperative that teams of teachers with special competencies be made responsible for teaching its various aspects to make the subject more meaningful and functional. Successful classroom teaching and learning depends primarily on the teacher's personal qualities, professional competence and the appropriateness of the teaching techniques to the age level of the learner. Research suggests that students who do not feel connected to peers and their teachers often have a higher rate of academic failure (Jenson 1998). "The formation of interdisciplinary teams has been proposed as one way of reducing student alienation and increasing students' sense of membership. Teams provide students with a greater sense of identity, belonging, and support" (Wallace 2007).

The variety of patterns of social studies curriculum design have a continuous structure, goals and methods of social studies education has led to the advocacy of various teaching strategies of which the concept of "team teaching" is one Kisko (1981) advocated that teachers should endeavor to use variety of teaching techniques so as to maintain interest and cater for individual differences among learners. Alternating teaching techniques can be a means of effective teaching and learning process. Over the years, the focus on higher education research has shifted from an understanding of the teacher as the omniscient authority who transmits knowledge to passive recipients to a more inclusive appreciation of students as knowledge constructors and the need for teachers to act as facilitators in that process (Biggs, 1999).

This paper is aimed at critically exposing the concept of team teaching by way of defining the term team teaching, types of team teaching; features of team teaching; implementation strategies of team teaching; merits and demerits of team teaching. It will also take into consideration the impacts of team teaching on the teaching and learning social studies in Nigeria. The careful planning and co-operation among all team members, team teaching will make a great breakthrough in the teaching and understanding of social studies education in the nation's school system.

## **2. Brief history of team teaching**

In a 1963, William M. Alexander — known as the “father of the American middle school” — was scheduled to discuss the structure of the junior high school at a conference at Cornell University. However, after re-thinking the needs of adolescents at this age, he proposed the middle school concept where a team of three to five teachers would be assigned to 75 to 150 pupils organized either on a single-grade or multi-grade basis (Alexander 1995). This recommendation of junior high school reform is where the idea of team teaching developed. Team teaching is now used in all grade levels and across disciplines. When done correctly, this approach has been shown to create bonding opportunities for students and to engage teachers in collaborative, interdisciplinary planning.

## **3. Team teaching**

Team teaching can be defined as a group of two or more teachers working together to plan conduct and evaluate learning activities for the same group of learners. Team teaching can therefore be viewed, as team work between two qualified instructors who, together, make presentations on an audience (the learners). Team-teaching “consists of two or more teachers sharing, to some degree, responsibility for a group of students” (Wenger & Hornyak, 1999, p. 314). Team teaching involves a group of instructors working purposefully, regularly, and cooperatively to help a group of students of any age learn. Teachers set goals together for a course, design a syllabus, prepare individual lesson plans, teach students, and evaluate the results of the teaching and learning process.

According to Yusuf (1996) team teaching is a method whereby sections of a class under a number of teachers are jointly responsible for the instruction. The aim of this method as viewed by him is to make teacher perform better, their, professional role to produce greater students' subject matter.

Frost & Rowland (1969) described team teaching as a promising approach, making possible, through common planning and directed action, the bold and flexible use of the particular talents of teaches. Team teaching to them is an instructional procedure whereby two or more teachers with complementary skills and interest can combine their talents to plan, activate

and evaluate the instruction for a group of students under conditions of flexible scheduling and grouping.

Trump & Miller (1976) define team teaching as an arrangement in which two or more teachers and their assistant, taking the advantage of more teachers and their competencies, plan, instruct and evaluate in one or more subject areas. Fraser (1969) refers to team teaching as “peer teaching”. To him teaching can be accomplished by a combined effort of a few outstanding teachers, who are both competent in their own areas and have demonstrated a facility for working effectively with fellow teachers, as well as some members of staff.

### *3.1.Types of team teaching*

There appears to be two broad categories of team teaching:

- ❖ Category A: Two or more instructors are teaching the same students at the same time within the same classroom;
- ❖ Category B: The instructors work together but do not necessarily teach at the same time. When instructors team teach the same group of students at the same time (category A), there are a number of different roles that these team teachers might perform. For monetary and spatial reasons this type of team teaching usually involves two partners. Six models of team teaching have been identified by Robinson and Schaible (1996). According to them category A teaching usually involves a combination of the models according to the personalities, philosophies or strengths of the team teachers as well as the personalities and strengths of the learners.

3.1.1. Traditional team teaching: In this case, the teachers actively share the instruction of content and skills to all students. For example, one teacher may present the materials to the learners while the other teacher oversees the activities of learners and observe their behavior/ expressions as they listen to the presenting teacher.

3.1.2. Collaborative Teaching: This process involves team teachers working together in designing the course content and teaching the material by exchanging and discussing idea and theories in front of the learners. It uses group learning techniques for the learners, such as small group work, student led-discussion.

- 3.1.3. Complementary/Supportive Team Teaching: This situation occurs when one teacher is responsible for teaching the content to the students, while the other teacher takes charge of providing follow up activities on related topics or on assisting learners to develop study skills.
- 3.1.4. Parallel Instruction: In this setting the class is divided into two groups and each teacher is responsible for teaching the same material to his or her smaller groups. This model is suitable when students are involved in project or problem – solving activities, as the instructor can walk around the class and give students individualized support.
- 3.1.5. Differentiated Split Class: This type of teaching involves dividing the class into smaller groups according to learning needs. Each educator provides the respective group with the instruction needed to meet their learning needs.

3.2. *Monitoring Teacher*: This situation occurs when one teacher assumes the responsibility for instructing the entire class, while the other teacher circulates the room and monitors students' understanding and behavior.

Category B: team teaching consists of a variety of team teaching models, in which instructors work together but do not necessarily teach the same groups of students, or if they do, they do not teach these students at the same time. This category of team teaching can take many forms.

Teams of teachers sharing a common resource centre. Teachers instruct classes independently, but share resource materials such as lessons, plans, supplementary textbooks and exercise problems.

One individual plans the instructional activities for the entire team. This model does not take full advantage of the team concept as only one individual's ideas are incorporated. Sometimes due to time or financial constraints, there may be no alternative to one person designing the entire program. Teams, in which members share a common group of students, share the planning for instruction but each different sub-group within the whole group of students.

No single model of team teaching will automatically result in success for a given teaching situation. Any model adopted must be suitable to the age and mental development of the learner

and must be customized to suit the curriculum. Teaching and learning would be more suitable if one or more models are adopted in the classroom.

#### **4. Features of team teaching**

There are many ways of structuring team teaching in a social studies classroom as there are in teaching. Certain characteristics are common to most team teaching approaches. According to Popham and Baker (1973) the following can be identified:

1. There are multiple teaching personnel – which mean a teacher will be teamed with other teachers of equal status and responsibilities or differentiated status and responsibilities.
2. A larger than customary group of students will be instructed by the teaching personnel.
3. There will typically be supplementary para professional personnel such as students, teacher and clerical assistants to aid the instructional staff.
4. Various teaching techniques can be used for effective teaching and learning process.

#### **5. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES IN TEAM TEACHING**

Team teaching according to Robinson and Schaible (1995) should be limited to two people, as good team teaching is too complex with more than two teachers. They insist that prospective team teaching partner be someone possessing a healthy psyche”. Someone who does not demand power or control as well as someone who is not defensive or easily offended.

Before team teaching can be successfully implemented, certain elements must be considered. According to lyewarun (2000) the following must be considered:

1. The key objectives must be clearly stated.
2. Appropriate and efficient personnel who have the primary responsibilities for meeting the objective, must be identified.
3. The definite task or programmes that are to be accomplished should also be identified and well organized.
4. A monitoring system has to be set up to identify obstacles to be encountered along the way.

5. The feedback should be utilized to plan potential strategies for resolving or minimizing anticipated and actual problems.

Goetz (2000) maintained the following implementation strategies for a successful team teaching program: Prior to implementation, the team members should have sufficient professional development in the area of team teaching; they should understand the philosophy behind team teaching and the rationale of how it will fit with the rest of the school program.

Educators must “identify, implement and analyze the variable needed for every student to succeed”, (Brandenburg, 1997). Team members teaching the same class at the same time should meet daily or weekly to make important decisions about.

What to be presented (e.g. the units, lesson objectives) and in what order,

How the material is to be presented (e.g. to a large or small group),

Who is to present the information?

How the student will be assessed, and

How small group will be organized and which team teacher will be assigned to each group. After the team teaching program has been in effect for sometime the members should focus on improving their program through evaluation.

## **6. Merits of implementing team teaching**

The use of team teaching in the classroom has been used for many years with encouraging results. Students do not all learn at the same rate, periods of equal length are not appropriate for all learning situations. Schools are moving toward the inclusion of a whole dimension of learning which transmits to every member of the society things that has just been discovered, invented, created, manufactured, or marketed. For this, team members with different areas of expertise are invaluable. The presence of more than one instructor in the classroom increases the occasions for student-teacher interaction (Wadkins, Miller, & Wozniak, 2006).

Team teaching improves the quality of teaching as various experts approach the same topic from different angles: theory and practice, past and present, different genders or ethnic backgrounds. Teacher strengths are combined and weaknesses are remedied. Poor teachers can be observed, critiqued, and improved by the other team members in a nonthreatening, supportive

context. The evaluation done by a team of teachers will be more insightful and balanced than the introspection and self-evaluation of an individual teacher.

Inlow (1970) states that in a team teaching arrangement, specialized teacher competencies conveniently spread over a large student population when excellent lecturers are among the team. He argues that a curriculum becomes more vital when more than one teacher concentrate on its purposes and preferred manner of implementation. To him as a member of the team is watched by his colleagues and students, he prepares more carefully and instructs more efficiently than when no one is observing him. Rotimi (1983) is of the view that with a careful division of labor team teaching can facilitate better utilization of staff, equipment, facilities and time. She believes it promotes job satisfaction because the approach reduces the frustration of those teachers who have little or no knowledge in certain subject areas.

Mansell (1974) sees team teaching as one for the best means of staff development and utilization and for maximum achievement for student if well planned and implanted. Team teaching gives opportunities to members to develop and enhance their individual skills, approaches and methods. Team members are part of a supportive environment in which they are exposed. Other researchers have found that team teaching results in significant gains in student attitude and modes of thinking, (Carpenter, Crawford, & Walden, 2007). Yellowley and Farmer (2006) also found that team teaching resulted in improved student process in problem-solving. However, several researchers found no gains in student learning or attitude in their study of team teaching (Dugan & Letterman, 2008; Wadkins, Miller, & Wozniak, 2006).

Team teaching benefits the teachers, working closely with one or two colleagues enable teachers overcome the isolation inherent in teaching. By working together, team teachers can discuss issues relating to students, such as behavioral expectations, students' motivation and teaching policies and come up with improved solutions. Team teaching cuts teaching burdens and boosts morale of both teachers and students. The presence of another teacher reduces student-teacher personality problems. In an emergency one team teacher can attend to the problem while the class goes on. Sharing in decision-making boost self-confidence, as teachers see the quality of teaching and learning improves their self-esteem increases.



Robinson and Schaible (1995) describe each team member as a sounding board for sharing the joys and disappointments of particular class session. When team teaching involves interdisciplinary subjects, each member can gain enlightenment about lesser – known fields, and therefore grow intellectually.

On the part of the student's the following can be identified as merits of team teaching: Team teaching can expose students' to accepting more than one opinion and to acting more cooperatively with other. It can provide educational benefits such as increasing the students' level of understanding and retention, in addition to enabling the student to obtain higher achievement.

The varieties of teaching skills, method and approaches used by the team teachers can also bring about new ideas, change in behavior and thoughts as well as greater learning styles. The cooperation that the students observe team teachers serve as a model for teaching students' positive team work skills and attitudes. Learning is made more permanent through team teaching and the learners are exposed to improved interpersonal skills.

Team teaching encourages cooperative efforts among teachers, it facilitates inter-personal relationship among teachers and students, it provides opportunity for experimenting different roles, it encourages each specialist teacher to contribute his/her quota, and it also helps in joint development of teaching tools.

If properly implemented, however, its potential for individualized instruction is enormous. Innovations are encouraged, and modifications in class size, location, and time are permitted. Different personalities, voices, values, and approaches spark interest, keep attention, and prevent boredom in the classroom.

### **7. Demerits of implementing team teaching**

Despite the laudable prospects of team teaching, it would be unrealistic to believe that team teaching has no challenges. For instance, despite its potentially positive features the approach could become trivial and rigid if care is not exercised. According to Inlow (1970), the most fundamental demand in the procedure is close cooperation among team participants. If this is lacking, he believes that the approach will not only fall short of its potential but will lead to misunderstanding and fruitless efforts among teachers and students alike.

Other problems that can impede the success of teaching includes students detachment; teachers nonchalant attitude to active participation; and lack of necessary and adequate facilities

in the school. Opposition may also come from students, parents, and administrators who may resist change of any sort. Some students flourish in a highly structured environment that favors repetition. Some are confused by conflicting opinions. Too much variety may hinder habit formation

Team teaching is time consuming as seen in the numerous meetings of team teachers before final implementation. Team teaching makes more demands on time and energy. Members must arrange mutually agreeable times for planning and evaluation. Discussions can be draining and group decisions take longer. Rethinking the courses to accommodate the team-teaching method is often inconvenient. Time is taken up by innumerable planned spontaneous meetings dealing with planning the course, agreeing on guidelines for such issues as consistency when grading writing or tests, how to deal with issues relating to improving contents of lessons, pedagogy and evaluation.

Team teaching may introduce certain challenges to the students. Some students may feel frustration and discontent about having more than one teacher at a time. Some may be distracted in the process by the presence of another teacher, especially when they are doing two different things at the same time. When team teaching involves a large class size, it may be detrimental to some students, particularly students with attention deficits disorders, or students who feel uncomfortable or anonymous in large group settings.

Team teachers' incompatibility not adequately checked; pose a challenge to effective teaching and learning process. Different philosophies and ideologies of teachers create a chasm in the team's working relationship.

Despite the fault that many prominent educators describe team teaching as promising approach, Olson (1967) state:

“My experience with team teaching has led me to conclude that:

Quite a few teams are dismal failures, many teaching teams do not make a significant enough contribution to the education of the students to warrant the time and effort devoted to them and a few actually retard the educational development of students very few students provide significant independent study experiences for student.... Although teaching teams may lose vitality and purpose

cease to make a significant contribution to the education of students, all too often they remain in existence”

Though, the above views, on team teaching, may be regarded as one of the minority, they serve as a reminder to prospective users of team teaching to be aware of certain pit-falls and direct the attention of prospective users to the need for careful planning and understanding, among team members.

### **8. Impact of team teaching on social studies classroom**

The varieties of patterns for social studies curriculum design fall along a continuous structure between separate and integrated subject matter. Theoretically, it seems likely impossible to find a situation in social studies instruction, whereby separate subjects are taught without any reference, implied or otherwise, to other subjects. This cannot be avoided when it is realized that functional social studies curriculum is basically designed to embrace or encourage interrelationship among all related social science subjects. Engle (1977), views social studies as an applied field which attempts to fuse scientific knowledge with ethical, philosophical, religious and social considerations which arise in the process of decision making as practiced by the citizen. Thus team teaching creates an avenue for this interrelationship among all related social science subjects to be displayed and harmonized to bring about effective learning in the classroom.

The nature of social studies as an integrated discipline, makes it imperative that team of teachers with special competencies be made responsible for teaching its various aspects to make the subject more meaningful and functional in the classroom teaching and learning process. The nature and scope of social studies, its current trend in our schools, the limited number and qualifications of the teachers who teach it and the number of teachers trained in other fields teaching the subjects, all points to the problems hindering effective social studies education. Krug (1972) maintains that it has been suggested by leading educators in social studies that the revolution in the subject should henceforth move in the direction of an interdisciplinary social studies curriculum. He states further that the move would obliterate the boundaries between other social science subjects. In view of these needs and difficulties, the best staff utilization for maximum benefits from social studies education might be the “team teaching” arrangement in the classroom.

Team teaching approach in social studies classroom, combined efforts and competencies of specialists in its various aspects could help restore balance to its teaching and learning. Although at the outset, team teaching in social studies will inherently require more time and necessitate more compromises than other educational approaches, the advantages to both the educators and the students appear to make team teaching enormously worthwhile. The extra time taken up by staff development and daily or weekly meeting provides a richer learning environment. Team teaching can make learning a cooperative and growing process for both students and teachers in the classroom, which can be seen as an important aspect of social studies.

For the students, being exposed to more than one teacher's point of view might cause confusion and even bewilderment. On the other hand, hearing two or more perspectives in the classroom likely encourages intellectual stimulation, reinforcement of new concepts, and openness to a variety of outlooks and interpretations, particularly as we recognize the need to respect the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of students. Therefore, team teaching in social studies classroom promotes a culture of intellectual inquiry and scholarship.

Team teaching exposes the strengths of each teacher and magnifies them in order to strengthen better utilization of teachers' strengths. No teacher is excellent in all phases of teaching role. One may be good at presenting ideas, while another best in retrenching the slow learners who missed some ideas in the first presentation, or is able to diagnose a learner's needs. Another does well in correcting written expressions. Through observing and planning together, team teachers deepen their sensitivity of the complexities of teaching and learning.

Team teaching is a form of organization in which individual teachers decide a pool of resource, interests, and expertise in order to devise and implement a scheme of work suitable to the needs of their learner and the facilities of their school. The implication of this team teaching in social studies classroom seeks to treat each student as an individual entity and instructions are given based on mental development, needs and interests of the learner. The needs of the learner are the focal point in team teaching.

As a result of the overwhelming advantages over its shortcomings, team teaching may well constitute a significant breakthrough as one of the most viable approaches to the teaching of social studies with careful planning and organization of material; together with commitment

and cooperation among all team members, team teaching will make a great breakthrough in the teaching and understanding of social studies education in the nation's school system.

### **9. Conclusion**

A careful analysis of the concept team teaching and its impacts on social studies classroom it is worthy of note that the implementation of team teaching in social studies will be a long way in promoting the goals and objectives of social studies education. All things being considered, team teaching so enhances the quality of learning that it is sure to spread widely in the future. Of course, team teaching is not the only answer to all problems plaguing teaching and learning. It requires planning, skilled management, willingness to risk change and even failure, humility, open-mindedness, imagination, and creativity. But the results are worth it.

It will also facilitate effective teaching and learning of the subject, while it promotes better understanding of social studies subject-matter. It should be emphasized therefore, that to make team teaching more functional and effective, other factors play important roles. These factors include, among others, provision for administrative training to assist the team in developing the skills and positive attitudes of working together. There is strong reason to anticipate tremendous progress and major improvement in social studies education if team teaching approach is not only accepted but widely applied.

Team teaching may not be for everyone, many teachers prefer to be the only one in charge of their students learning. However, team teaching in social studies classroom should be attractive to those who want to make learning more permanent. Team teaching places the needs of the learners above the needs of the teacher. Team teaching will encourage patriotism, interdependence among learners which is one of the objectives of social studies education in Nigeria.

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