



RESEARCH ARTICLE

SCAFFOLDING AS A STRATEGY FOR TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

The protracted quest for sustainability of teaching strategies in Social Studies and Civic education depicts dynamism based on the context and content of what teachers present as subject matter in the given sub-disciplines. From the dimension of teaching and learning processes, scaffolding as an innovative strategy has gained attention in academic institutions within the developed countries. The progress necessitates an overview of a case study within an emerging university environment in Nigeria with a view to erasing the past neglect of the vitality and values of adopting not scaffolding strategy. The results reveal that scaffolding remains one of the most powerful educational strategies in Social Studies education that enhances the achievement of Social Studies goals, but the level of knowledge application is constraints by limited facilities that can aid practical works. Similarly, the instructional strategy has help in bridging the gap between students' abilities by providing structured support and gradually increasing students' independence. It also possesses high potential to foster a deeper understanding of Social Studies content, development of essential analytical skills, and achievement of the goals of Social Studies as enshrined in the National Policy on Education. Therefore, scaffolding is seen as a Social Studies strategy that can enhance the learners to acquire the 21st century skills needed to explore the contemporary environment. This study recommends that curriculum planners and organizations should incorporate more 21st century packages including scaffolding practical for delivering social studies content to achieve values and other set goals.

Keywords: Scaffolding, social studies, teaching strategy, traditional method

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Received: 2/1//2024; **Revised:** 242/2025; **Accepted:** 22/2/2025; **Published:** 28:2:2025



1.0. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary advancements, trends and innovations in instructional strategies and methods in Social Studies and Civic Education suggest complexities in paradigm shifts within the past six decades globally. The shifts are highly favourable to academic institutions in the developed nations such as United States of America, Canada, Britain, and Australia, properly due to progress in funding and allied supports to researches and innovations in education, science, and technology. Within the sub-Sahara African countries and Nigeria in particular, the diffusion in educational advancements, trends, and innovations are gradually gaining ground at the periphery. The patterns suggest urgent demand for a shifting emphasis from periphery to the core for the sustainability of instructional strategies and methods that can boost education development.

Scaffolding is an instructional strategy where teachers provide successive levels of temporary support to help students achieve higher levels of comprehension and skill acquisition than they would independently. That is, the disparity between a learner capacity regardless of guidance and capacity that is backed by guidance is embedded in scaffolding.

Within Social Studies education, scaffolding is particularly effective due to the complex and often abstract nature of the study which includes history, geography, economics, civics, and culture. This strategy can make challenging materials more accessible, keep students engaged, promotes deeper understanding and critical skills. In another perspective, scaffolding in education constitute very essential component of teaching and learning which is often used to bridge learning gaps like the difference between what students have learned and what they are expected to know and be able to do at a certain point in their education (Oruwari (2021).

In view of the complex modern life, the present situation in Nigeria calls for teaching strategies that can expose the learners to those skills and competencies such as creative thinking skill, critical thinking, effective communication, problem solving and collaboration skills. Educators and stakeholders of education strongly advocate that students should acquire skills that can enable them thrive in today's world because acquisition of facts, knowledge



and skill through teacher-centered method is no longer adequate. Thus, learners need to be adaptive, flexible and creative in order to adjust to the changing environment.

Interpersonal domain is one of the domains in educational system in Nigeria. It is the newest domain in the field of education. Its emergence was as a result of the dominance of the traditional domains of education namely cognitive, affective and psychomotor where the teacher is the breadwinner in the class leaving the learner as a passive participant. The interpersonal domain has given the learner the opportunity to be active participant in the classroom with little support from the teacher just like scaffolding strategy of teaching. Scaffolding started gaining relevance in the educational system as a result of the introduction of the interpersonal/social domain where the teacher only give supportive assistance to the learner and allow him to practice what he has learnt (Uzoagba, 2020).

Scaffolding is an instructional technique or support given to students by a teacher or an instructor throughout learning process. This support is specifically tailored to each student, and allows them experience student-centered learning which tends to facilitate more efficient learning than the teacher centered learning experience. Scaffolding provides sufficient support to promote learning when the concepts and skill are being first introduced to students. These supports may include resources, compelling task, templates and guides or guidance on the development of cognitive and social skills. Instructional scaffolding could be employed through modeling a task, as well as giving advice or providing coaching.

Amidst the prevailing values, the perceived supports can gradually be removed as students develop autonomous learning strategies; thus, promoting their own cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning skills and knowledge. Teachers use scaffolding as a strategy of teaching to help students master a task or concept by providing support. The support can take many forms such as story boards or key questions. Scaffolding as a strategy of learning promotes deeper level learning than many other common strategies (Belland, Brain, Glazewski, Krista, Richardson, Jennifer, 2008).

Similarly, scaffolding refers to strategy where teachers offer a particular kind of support to students as they learn and develop a new concept or skill. In the structural scaffolding model,



a teacher may share new information or demonstrate how to solve a problem. The teacher then gradually steps back and allows the students practice on their own. Scaffolding is one such educational techniques that is so powerful in teaching and learning because it helps students to retain and apply new knowledge. It is one of the strategies of teaching Social Studies that has made learners to retain what they have learnt. Thus, scaffolding and Social Studies are like a two sided coin. Scaffolding as a Social Studies teaching strategy is a good match because Social Studies is an environmental subject that helps the learners to concretize concept because what they learn is what they see, touch and feel. Social Studies is one of the basic education subjects that is taught in all levels of educational system in Nigeria. It inculcates good attitudes, civil duties, citizenship participation in electoral process, skill acquisition, moral values and appropriate discipline to learners (Ebebe, 2017).

One who internalizes these Social Studies values has the propensity to survive in a changing world. Instructional scaffolding in Social Studies is a supportive teaching method that helps Social Studies student to be independent in the absence of the teacher. The use of scaffolding in teaching Social Studies allows students to observe, touch and practice what the teacher taught them by so doing the students become self-reliant and develop the spirit of self-actualization and resourcefulness.

2.0. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Concept Clarifications

Scaffolding

Scaffolding was coined by Psychologist Jerome Brunner, the concept is rooted in Vygotsky's theory of zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the difference between what a learner can do without help and what they can do with guidance. The model of instructional scaffolding is also sometimes described as "I do. We do". Scaffolding is a strategy of teaching Social Studies in the contemporary time. Sawyer (2006) sees scaffolding as the provision of support by teachers to promote learning when concepts and skills are being introduced to the students for the first time. These supports may include: resources, a compelling task, templates and guidance on the development of cognitive and social skills.



He stressed that supports are gradually removed as the students develop autonomous learning strategies, thereby promoting their own cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning skill and knowledge.

Similarly, Alake and Ogunseemi (2013) stressed that Scaffolding instruction is the role teachers give to support the learners' development by providing support structures to get to the next stage or level. As a learner gains control of the new learning, the teacher withdraws the support gradually as the learner becomes increasingly able to complete the task alone.

2.2. Perspective and Teaching Strategy in Social Studies

Mezieobi, Fubara & Mezieobi (2013) defined Social Studies as an integrative field of study which probes man's symbolic relationships with his environment, endows man with the reflective or contemplative capacities, intellectual, affective, social and work skills, to enable him to understand his world and its problems, and to rationally solve or cope with them for effective living in the society. Supporting this view, Ebirim, Uzoagba & Ebebe (2012) stressed that Social Studies aim at inculcating the acquisition of necessary skills, abilities and competences which an individual needs to be able to contribute to national development and to imbibe the right type of values and attributes for self and national survival.

Teaching strategies also known as instructional strategies are methods the teachers used to deliver course material in ways that keep students engaged and practised different skill sets. Thus, an instructor may select different teaching strategies according to unit, topic, grade level, class and classroom. However, strategies adopted in teaching can stimulate or kill interest and zeal to learn. Stones and Maris (2007) in Iwuamadi (2013) pointed out that teaching strategy is a generalized plan for a lesson which includes structure, desired learner behavior in terms of goals of instructions and an outline of planned tactics necessary to implement the strategy.

She further opined that many kinds of instructional strategies that are employed to achieve teaching and learning goals that support different kinds of students are for example, the teacher can select classroom activities based on instructional method like tic-tac-toe strategy, specific strategy like problem solving can be used for a particular skill, activities that promote



thinking and discussion can be in small groups, while Think-pair-share activities for cooperating learning.

The strategy of teaching Social Studies refers to the methods, approaches, and techniques used by educators to effectively convey Social Studies content to students. Social Studies encompass a range of subjects, including history, geography, Civic, economics and sociology, aiming to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of society and its complexities (Iwuamadi, 2013).

Some of the dominant strategies for teaching Social Studies outline and discusses thus:

- i. **Active Learning:** It involves engaging students in activities that require critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration such as debates, role-playing, simulation, and group project.
- ii. **Differentiated Instruction:** This is tailoring teaching methods and materials to meet the diverse needs, interest and abilities of students, ensuring that all learners can access and engage with the content.
- iii. **Integration of Technology:** This involves utilizing digital tools and resources, such as multimedia presentations, interactive maps, online debates and educational software to enhance learning and make the content more accessible and engaging.
- iv. **Inquiry-Based Learning:** This entails encouraging students to ask questions, conduct research and explore topics in-depth fostering a sense of curiosity and developing critical thinking skills.
- v. Interdisciplinary Approaches
- vi. Cultural relevance
- vii. Real-world connections
- viii. Assessment of feedback

Employing these strategies, Social Studies teachers can create a dynamic scaffolding strategy that foster critical thinking, cultural awareness and civic engagement among students.

Teaching strategies refer to the methods, techniques, procedures and processes that a teacher uses during instruction. It is generally recognized that teaching strategies are



multidimensional and their effectiveness depends on the context in which they are applied. There is no single strategy that can guarantee better student outcomes, however, research has highlighted a number of practices that enable learning among students. The effect of these strategies is influenced by how the teacher adapts and applies the right strategy to deal with the target group and help students learn the desired course content and achieve the intended learning outcomes. The intended learning outcomes should guide which approach best suits the achievement of those outcomes.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

Scaffolding was coined by Psychologist Jerome Brunner, the concept is rooted in Vygotsky's theory of zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the difference between what a learner can do without help and what they can do with guidance.

Scaffolding is closely linked to Vygotsky's theory of the ZPD, which suggests that students learn best when they are challenged just beyond their current abilities but within the reach with the help of a teacher a peer. In Social Studies, where students often engage with complex concepts (e.g. democracy, justice, historical causation), scaffolding helps them to tackle challenging material they might not understand on their own. Scaffolding in Social Studies teaching support students' cognitive development, critical thinking, and engagement, while also accommodating diverse learning needs. It aligns with key educational theory as Vygotsky's ZPD, making it a powerful strategy for helping students master complex Social Studies contented skills.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative method in assessing the context and content of scaffolding strategy in the teaching and learning process of Social Studies education. Secondary data were generated from existing literature and the emerging issues and thrusts are thematically clarified using discourse perspective.

4.0. DISCOURSES



4.1. Can scaffolding be used in Teaching and Learning Social Studies?

In every educational setting, the learner is the centerpiece of the teaching and learning. Scaffolding can best be described as an effective strategy in teaching Social Studies. The strategies emphasize an “I do, we do, you do”. This expression indicates starting the learners out in the shallow end of the pool rather than throwing them into the deep end with no life preserver, Nwali, 2014 & Chdiuwe, 2005).

The use of scaffolding in teaching Social Studies can best be described as when the teacher uses diagrams and pictures to illustrate the topics being taught to the learners. Example, the teacher can provide a picture of a building under construction with a scaffold as a supportive base, once the building is set the builder remove the scaffold. The role of the teacher in the contemporary classroom is to act as a support base to the students in teaching and learning. Ebirim, Uzoagba and Ohizu (2015) opined that Social Studies is an environment subject, mostly students are taken outside the classroom to see, touch and have experiences of what they are being taught in form of field trip. The teacher guides the students to ensure that they do not wander aimlessly outside the aim and objective of the lesson being taught. However, Oruwari (2021), Dike (2006) and Ezegebe (2008) suggested that scaffolding strategy if properly implemented is widely considered an essential element of effective teaching, a supportive strategy that the teachers gradually shift more responsibility to learners during learning process, and as well a reliable method for lifelong learning.

4.2. Scaffolding as a Strategy for Teaching Social Studies

Scaffolding is a way of providing students with temporary framework for learning. Scaffolding can be used to teach Social Studies in the classroom. Example, the teacher can provide mock television in classroom and dissect it while the students observe what he is doing. After a while, the teacher allows the students to assemble the television, experience gotten from such learning exercise remains permanent and concrete in the lives of the students. In Social Studies classroom, students see, touch and practice what they have learnt. Scaffolding as a method of teaching Social studies enables the student to act independently with the little assistance from the teacher. When scaffolding is properly implemented,



students are encouraged and are highly motivated, Uzoagba (2020). Scaffolding method is an attempt to re-shape the traditional approach.

In using the strategy, the teacher uses small groups of students to tackle related problems in a topic taught rather than presenting them with a bunch of facts using the lecture method. A teacher that is using scaffolding strategy to teach guides and gives direct instruction to the students to acquire factual or technical knowledge. This can help them tackle series of well-sequenced problems found in the environment. Like “drop out of school”. The teacher can stress the learner with activities that he can actively seek to know the effect and solutions to the problem rather than passively assimilating the information. This will help to equip the learners to confront the vicissitude of life. Wales and Stager (1976) in Dike (2006) stressed that teachers should use relevant scaffolding sentences, and teaching aids as anchors and cues that enables learners to re-organize information they already have in order to create solutions in every situation.

Scaffolding method can also be used to achieve instructional objectives in Social Studies through teaching a topic like, interest, values and attitudes which cannot be handled by verbalization but through action. If a teacher is using scaffolding strategy in teaching, he can ask the learners how they can show love to one another through different types of food eaten by different groups of people of different ethnic groups.

4.3. Key Elements of Scaffolding in Social Studies

- i. Modeling and Demonstration:** Teachers first demonstrate the process or skill, showing students how to approach a task/problem. For instance, while analyzing a historical document, a teacher might model how to identify the author,s perspective and the documents historical context.
- ii. Prior knowledge Activation:** Connecting new content to students existing knowledge helps them relate to and better understanding of new information e.g. discussing current events in relation to historical events can help students see the relevance of Social Studies.
- iii. Guided Practice:** Students practice new skills with the teachers support, often through collaborative activities. In Social Studies, this might involve group



discussions or projects where students analyze primary sources or debate historical interpretation.

- iv. **Questioning Techniques:** Effective questioning can guide students thinking and help them make corrections. Open-ended questions encourage students to think critically and explore multiple perspectives on a given issue.
- v. **Use of Graphic Organizers:** Tools such as timeline, Venn diagrams, and concept maps can help students organize information and see relationship between concepts. These are particularly useful in Social Studies for comparing different historical events or analyzing the causes and effects of a particular events.
- vi. **Gradual release of Responsibility:** Overtime, the teacher gradually reduces support, encouraging students to take more responsibility for their learning. This process helps students build confidence and independence in their ability to tackle complex Social studies topics.

4.4. Benefits of Scaffolding in Teaching and Learning

- i Enhanced Engagement
- ii Encourages collation and social interaction
- iii Allows for differentiation
- iv Gives teachers insights into learners progress
- v. Promotes critical thinking skills
- vi. Support a variety of learning styles
- vii. Improved Understanding
- viii. Development of Critical thinking
- ix. Support for Diverse learners

5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

Scaffolding is a powerful educational strategy in Social Studies education that enhances the achievement of Social Studies goals, and as well helps bridge the gap between student's abilities by providing structured support and gradually increasing student's independence. Scaffolding fosters a deeper understanding of Social Studies content and development of



essential analytical skills. Therefore, government should embark on effective training of teachers on the usage of the strategy, and curriculum planners and school authority should emphasize and employ strict supervision to make sure that teachers adopt this strategy in teaching and learning since it can help students to internalize values, skills and attitudes that can facilitate lifelong learning.

5.2. Recommendations

- i. Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Education should train and retrain teachers through workshops, seminars and conferences with requisite skills, competences and knowledge on the use of scaffolding strategy.
- ii. Curriculum planners like NERDC should incorporate with the curriculum package specific scaffolding practical examples of instructional strategies for delivering social studies content to achieve attitude values and other set goals.
- iii. Government should provide current facilities that can aid teaching at ease with scaffolding strategy.

Competing Interest

The author declares that no competing interest exist in this paper.

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