

ES-343: TEACHING OF SOCIAL STUDIES

i) Discuss the importance of teaching social studies in secondary school curriculum in present day context. (500 Words)

Introduction :

Social Studies education is responsible for creating good citizens; which are necessary in a democratic society.

Social studies curriculum covers a wide array of subjects including history, civics and geography. Despite covering several different content areas, the core of all social studies courses remains the same: human interaction. The role of social studies in education is to enable students to explore how people relate to each other and also what the consequences of these relationships will be. Through this exploration of human interaction, social studies provides students with the critical thinking and reasoning skills that are necessary for them to become productive members of society.

Importance of Social studies :

The World in Which We Live

Social studies education helps explain the world in which we live. Much like science teaches children to observe the physical aspects of life, social studies encourages children to open their minds to the many places humans live on this planet. Not only does the social studies curriculum teach physical geography, but as students learn about different places, they also become aware of the many cultural differences of the world's populations through the study of sociology and anthropology. As they learn more about cultural differences, students begin to find that there are a large number of cultural similarities as well.

A Sense of History

Studying social studies helps students figure out their role in society as well as their place in history. By studying the past, students learn how institutions, traditions and ideals change as society modernizes. They also learn how cause and effect influence relationships between individuals, groups and nations. As students mature, the study of history gives students the chance to develop their research skills and the ability to think critically. A sense of history gives students good background knowledge as they study other subjects, such as literature.

Citizenship

Social studies students learn they are part of a larger societal organization that must have structure in order to operate for the good of all the people in the group. This basic sense of citizenship starts in the primary grades as students work to monitor classroom rules and expands as students study the electoral process, the branches of government and how citizens interact within the laws of a society in more advanced classes. The social studies curriculum also compares other types of government institutions found outside the India. Civic education allows students to analyze foreign governments while at the same time developing an appreciation for the freedoms accorded citizens by the Indian Constitution. Civic lessons cross inter-disciplinary lines and are often a part of geography, history and civics lessons.

Making a Living

Economic themes find their way into the social studies curriculum in a variety of ways. From the basic concept of want versus need taught in primary grades to advanced concepts such as global economic policy discussed in a high school current events class, economics is an integral part of social studies education. As students learn about the four factors of production -- land, labor, capital and entrepreneurship -- they begin to realize that these all contribute to what goods and services are available for consumers. Students study economic trends as they study history so they can better understand events such as recessions. On a more personal level, economics teaches students the basics of handling their own finances and helps them set career goals aligned with their personalities.

Citizenship

Social Studies is responsible for teaching students the citizenship skills that are required as people living in a democracy. Educating students on the importance of citizen involvement is the first step in creating a better society. Learning about citizenship includes topics like voting, volunteering, and being politically active. In history classes students also learn about the background on current issues, like health care, so that they can make more informed decisions when they enter society as adults.

Social Studies Skills

The skills developed in social studies are used across all curriculum. These skills include reading, writing, research, and analytical thinking. Social studies requires students to perform higher order thinking skills, like making inferences and forming opinions. These skills are invaluable not only in primary and secondary schooling, but also in higher education and life.

Human Interaction

Whether it be psychology, history, or geography, human interaction is the foundation of social studies. Understanding how humans interact is an important aspect of understanding life as a whole. The past, present, and future are all connected. While learning about how humans interact, students are able to start to form their own belief system. They will interpret what they learn about the past and present as good or bad and this will form the values that they have for their own lives.

Cultural Awareness

With each day that passes the world is growing more diverse and modern technology is bring those people closer together. A social studies education is responsible for teaching students about how people live in all parts of the world. This knowledge enables students to have better relationships with their peers who may be from a different cultural or ethnic background than they are. A better understanding of different cultures will also help students see current events from a global perspective.

Interpreting Information

Many students spend hours every day watching television, which is bombarding them with a multitude of images and ideas. Social studies teaches students how to understand the information that they are constantly receiving. Social studies teachers explain to students how to think, rather than what to think. Teachers present information and students then have to decide how they feel or what their own personal interpretation is. People who are able to practice pragmatism are valuable members of society and are more likely to come up with solutions to problems.

Geography

Social studies educators are responsible for teaching geography along with history, current events and culture. Reading and understanding maps, defining various landforms and memorizing place names are all skills that must be taught, preferably from an early age. On statewide and nationwide tests, students will be required to know continents, countries and capital cities. A solid knowledge of geography is the basic foundation for a social studies education to give students a view of their physical world.

History

History plays a large role in social studies. Students are required to learn about the past in order to provide them with a context for today's society and current events. Learning about the past allows students to analyze the trajectory of human and societal evolution and to discuss its impact on current and future affairs. History lessons also provide students with valuable role models, such as Martin Luther King, Eleanor Roosevelt and Cesar Chavez . As adult citizens, students will be expected to know the history of their country and of the world and to participate accordingly in analysis of current events. This crucial education begins with social studies.

Current Events

Social studies provide space in the school day for the discussion of critical current events. Students learn about the workings of their own government and those of other countries. Teachers can often connect this to students' lives by discussing events that affect their world. Students can hold mock presidential elections for all ages or discuss immigration laws in junior high and high school. Participating in educator-led discussions within the classroom teaches students how to synthesize and analyze information and debate opinions with civility.

Societal Analysis

Analysis is the highest level of social studies. Discussions of history and current events can lead to in-depth discussions on race, class and gender in society. Such analysis gives students a space in which to discuss the mechanisms of equality or inequality within our social systems, using history and current affairs as their contexts. Through such discussion and analysis, students learn to see issues from different perspectives, weigh opinions and think critically.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Social studies is important because it combines many different disciplines into a single subject. Lessons provide ample opportunities for reading aloud, shared reading and independent reading. There are also many opportunities for writing assignments on social studies topics. Studies of maps and geography tie in math and science. It is also possible to collaborate with other disciplines; teachers may incorporate an art project into their curriculum, allow students to study and listen to music from the past as part of their history lessons or play a game from another culture to include physical education. Using so many different types of approaches gives students with various strengths the opportunities to succeed.

Understanding

Perhaps the most important lessons social studies teach are understanding, compassion and tolerance for people across the world. Social studies classes and assignments often focus on learning about people in other countries. This is meant to expand students' worlds, which may previously have included only their homes, school, and town or city, to encompass a national and international community. Social studies also focus on differences and similarities between people, helping students learn to get along within their immediate community. Because social studies focus primarily on human interactions, they teach students how to act responsibly and compassionately within society.

The significance of Social Studies and secondary School curriculum

Social studies programs have as a major purpose the promotion of civic competence-which is the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of students to be able to assume "the office of citizen" (as Thomas Jefferson called it) in our democratic republic. Although civic competence is not the only responsibility of social studies nor is it exclusive to the field, it is more central to social studies than any other subject area in the schools.

It is important for secondary students in social studies programs to begin to understand, appreciate, and apply knowledge, processes, and attitudes from academic disciplines. But even such discipline-based learning draws simultaneously from several disciplines in clarifying specific concepts. A study of the concept of "the common good," for example, may draw upon some or all of the following:

** the discipline of history, to determine the concept's origin, study primary source documents that define and address the concept, and analyze the concept's development over time;*

** the discipline of geography, to locate where the concept was first developed, map its movement from one continent or nation to another, and recognize the power of the diffusion of ideas as an example of global linkage;*

** the discipline of political science, to determine the developing meaning of the concept as it is promoted or limited through existing political institutions, to study examples of actual practice related to the common good, and to acknowledge the need for citizen involvement in closing the distance between the ideal and reality;*

** the discipline of sociology, to examine the role of individuals, groups, and institutions and their relationship and responsibility to the common good, and to develop an understanding of the complexities*

of those relationships resulting from the diversity of beliefs, values, and structures within and among them; and

* communication abilities from language arts/English and the fine arts to enable students to express their understanding of the concept in a personally meaningful way.

* Social issues, such as poverty, crime, and public health, are increasingly understood to transcend the boundaries of disciplines, cultures, and nations. As these issues grow increasingly complex, the work to develop solutions demands an increasingly integrated view of scholarly domains and of the world itself.

Conclusion :

I believe social studies should be part of the curriculum for the purpose of helping students understand human interactions that occurred in the past, are occurring now, and that are likely to occur in the future. The reason for these understandings is they may help students develop and nurture values that will make it more likely that they will be able to determine for any situation what the right thing is and do it, especially when doing the right thing is hard to do. It is about decency, respect, courage and honor. This is not a difficult idea to understand, but it can take a lifetime to appreciate.

References

Lindquist, T. Seeing the Whole Through Social Studies. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

McAdoo, H. P. Family Ethnicity. San Francisco, CA: Sage.

Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies. National Council for the Social Studies.

"A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies: Building Social Understanding and Civic Efficacy." Social Education.

Patrick, J. J.. "Geography in History: A Necessary Connection in the School." ERIC Digest, (1993). Clearinghouse for Social Studies Education.