

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

Social studies are core-subject offered in Junior Secondary School educational system in Nigeria. This paper therefore examines various contending issues in social studies education curriculum. The definitions of relevant terms such as, Social studies education curriculum and social studies were x-rayed in the paper. Historical perspectives of social studies education, objectives of social studies curriculum and implementation issues as it affects social studies curriculum in Nigeria were discussed. The problems and prospects of social studies were explained in the paper. Some of the problems of Social Studies include: problem of content selection, methodology problem, degrading societal values, inadequate teaching aids and inadequate availability of Social Studies text books. Recommendations were made based on the literature reviewed in this study. Among the recommendations are: Teaching of Social Studies in our Schools, Colleges and Universities should be exclusively reserved for graduates of social Studies education. Government should provide adequate funding to education in general and Social Studies curriculum implementation in particular in the area of workshops, internet service, libraries, teaching aids and adequate textbooks. Social studies teacher should be computer literate in order to cope with the challenges of Information Technology. Only those that meet up with the National Commission for Colleges of Education and National University Commission requirements should be given admission to study Social Studies in Nigerian schools.

Keywords: *Perspective, Social Studies Education, Curriculum Problems, Prospects.*

Introduction

One of the critical perspectives of Social Studies education curriculum in Nigeria is its implementation. There is the need to overhaul the implementation issues in Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria with a view to improve upon its execution in order to achieve the desired goals as demanded by the National Policy on Education. The National Policy on Education in the Federal Republic Nigeria (F.R.N.2013) viewed education in Nigeria of which social studies curriculum is core as an instrument par excellence for effecting national values and total development. According to Umar (2007), Social Studies education curriculum is a problem – approach discipline through which man learns about problems of survival in his environment. It is seen as a veritable tool for inculcating appropriate values, attitudes, skills and knowledge in citizens so that they can be functional and responsible. Okam (2002), regarded Social Studies as a curriculum instrument for inculcating citizenship norms- building. Many empirical studies revealed that we are yet to attain this goal. In other words the Nigerian populace, through their school systems, is yet to effectively achieve the desired ends that promoted the introduction and teaching of social studies in the country. The lapses are not entirely inherent in policy formulation as contained in the National Policy on Education.

The prospects of Social Studies education cannot be over emphasized as Social Studies is one of the school subjects that has the potential for inculcating the right type of virtues in the learner through united and interdisciplinary studies of man. It deals with all aspects of life of man in his social and physical environment. Nigerian has made many policies and programs to attain national development but from indications or observation, most of the efforts towards actualization of some of the laudable policies and programs seems to be illusive therefore there is high desire for Social Studies education as a discipline that values, honesty, respect, tolerance, transparency and patriotism for growth and development to thrive. In an agreement of the above assertion, Osakwe (2012) opined that social studies is geared towards providing young ones with the opportunity to nurture the virtues of self-realization, better human relationships, national unity social and political advancement as well as scientific and technological development. It brings about new and integrated approaches at resolving societal and environmental issues for national development. The introduction of social studies into Nigerian school curriculum cannot be overemphasized due to the fact that it infuses in the young one the love of the country thereby fostering national unity that is essential to our development as a

nation (Abubakar 2013). Social Studies educations contribute immensely in the attainment of national goals through citizenship education.

Concept of Social Studies

Social Studies is a reformatory school instruction designed to equip the learners with desirable attitudes, values, skills and knowledge for cohesive social existence in Nigerian society (Mezieobi, 2011). Social Studies education is the science of doing or making (creative ideas, social inventions and objects) that will enable man interact with (and contribute productively to his) environment (development) efficiently (Orisa, 2011). Social Studies have been described by different writers in different perspective depending on the way and manner they perceive it. Social studies as a subject is a problem solving discipline introduced at both primary and junior secondary schools to inculcate into the young ones ability to study beings, identify their problems and find probable solutions to such problems. Supporting the above view, Oyebola (2012), states that the introduction of Social Studies into the Nigerian school system was based on certain philosophical consideration. One of the considerations is to address social issues and mans problem of life in their interrelatedness instead of addressing them in an un-interrelated manner. Social studies as a discipline, ruminates on the dynamism of society and the changing nature of knowledge and so it evolves new and integrated approaches at resolving societal and environmental problems. Social studies is the field of education or common learning of man's interaction with the social, physical, economical and political environment which brings about human improvement (Ndan and Jarimi 2011).

Social Studies are field of education or study that functions within an integrated curriculum perspective. A theory is a foundation on which teaching and learning experiences are built. The theory explains the basis on which certain practices and events happen in a given phenomenon. The term "Social Studies" came into "general use in comparatively recent years". The National Education Association of America gave it official recognition in 1916 and "the teachers of social subjects selected the name National Council for the Social Studies for their new organization in 1921". The concept is now generally used to designate that phase of the curriculum in primary and secondary schools that deals with the relations of human beings to one another and to their environment.

Ndan and Jarimi (2011) stressed further that Social Studies has always been misconceived as one of the compartmentalized social science subjects. Although, Social Studies and the social sciences both deal with human relationships the Social Studies focuses at the level of childhood and adolescence and the social sciences at the level of adult. The social scientist is concerned primarily with expanding the boundaries of knowledge and with developing highly specialized scholars in such fields as history, geography, political science, economics, sociology, anthropology and other related subjects. The Social Studies Scholar on the other hand is interested in the wide dissemination of information, the development of social attitudes, values and skills for the improvement of human development and progress.

Historical Development of Social Studies in Nigeria

Social Studies made its debut, nationwide, or on a national basis as a distinct curriculum artifact in Nigerian schools in September, 1982. This is not to deny the fact that before this period there were patches of the goal-object which the modern Social Studies is striving to provide and perpetuate (Mezieobi and Meziobi 2012). They stated that the content of Social Studies in Nigeria is Nigerian in outlook, or in all its ramifications, and has been part and parcel of the Nigerian indigenous curriculum right from the beginnings of the geo-polity today known as Nigeria except for certain aspects of it that have been refined or modified to accommodate societal dynamism and newer trends and developments. The equally observed that "the traditional Social Studies held sway before the arrival of western Social Studies.

During the colonial era in Nigeria, with its concomitant establishment of schools by the Christian Missions, Social Studies education was couched in religious education. They vividly highlighted this point when she noted that:

Social Studies education was patronized through religious education ...Social Studies functions came to be performed through some formal teaching of good behaviour, 'manner morals... The content of this (Social Studies tainted) manner

morals (religious) curriculum was largely the graces of well-mannered, morally 'good' persons.

Furthermore, in reinforcing the existence and teaching of Social Studies in the colonial period in Nigeria before October 1, 1960, observed that Social Studies was taught in Nigerian schools under different titles or in the canopy of general knowledge, general studies and civic education. Apart from the foregoing, the discrete subjects such as religion, history, geography, civics, government, economics which were introduced in schools with their establishment in colonial Nigeria, each had its social content areas. Nonetheless, what went on in colonial Nigerian schools in the grab of Social Studies teaching was negatively portrayed by Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2012). Invariably, the colonial Social Studies curriculum served the interest of the colonial overlords and did not reflect the socio-cultural needs and milieu of the then Nigerians. It was also not relevant to the social life of the people which the social content of the indigenous curriculum did not relegate. No matter the negative impression of the colonial Social Studies curriculum, its import if it had been given a truly Nigerian environmental focus, colouration, relevance and sensitivity, in terms of making it truly Nigeria centric, led to its introduction in 1963 as a discrete subject at the Aiyetoro Comprehensive High School in present day Ogun State of Nigeria on experimental basis. The Aiyetoro experiment was to test run the curriculum in order to convincingly ascertain its workability, but the general disgust of some Nigerian educational pundits with the irrelevance of the colonial curriculum, including its social content, to real life experiences, led to heightened criticisms of the curriculum.

The pleasant outcome was the mounting of the first Nigerian National Curriculum Conference held in Lagos, Nigeria between 8th and 12th of September, 1969 to reappraise the Nigerian Educational System and its curricular. This restructuring of the general tone of education in Nigeria, "culminated in the introduction of Social Studies as a discrete subject with a Nigerian bias as an education policy issue in the whole country. This marked the commencement of Social Studies in Nigerian schools on a national scale". But the actual commencement or implementation of Social Studies teaching began on September 13, 1982. However, the origin of Social Studies in the world is hinged on divergent views of frontiers of social studies. The unreliable and inexact views about the origin of social studies have created more confusion than having a direct focus on the origin of social studies (Mezieobi, Fabura & Mezieobi 2008). They observed that Social Studies originated from western world (West Europe and North America). Social studies found its way with Europe from United States of America especially Britain according to Osakwe and Itedjere. While the discrepancy from the foregoing on the origin of social studies were creating debates among scholars Saxe and Astute American professor of Social Studies Education at the university of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, U.S.A, clear the dust and allayed the fears of doubts here in Nigeria when he emphatically stated that 'the Foundation of social studies Education had its beginning in Great Britain after 1920's and spread quickly to the United States'. This justification and classification implies that we should accept and ascribe the origins of social studies in the world to Great Britain from where spread to other part of the world including Nigeria sin an American has acknowledged the origin and they are full of themselves to be the best in the world.

From the foregoing analysis of general origin of Social Studies, it evolved from Great Britain to Nigeria since those that provided the full up for its introduction were Americans. Nigerian scholars have no consensus agreement as to when social studies appeared in Nigeria. In the worlds of Mezieobi, the imported hypothesis of social studies was debunked and stated that the ascription of the origin of social studies to colonial time was a fallacy. To him, social studies have been there from inception of Nigeria from pre-colonial days. To Mezieobi what is new is the concept of social studies that was borrowed and became a discrete subject in the Nigerian schools. In Nigeria today, social studies contents is Nigeria specific as it focuses largely on Nigerian environment and its life style.

Social Studies as a defined area of study did not develop with the establishment of schooling in Nigeria alone but concerned with the development of a whole man through education (Okonkwo 2011), according to Okonkwo Social Studies education was patronized through religious education. A code of conduct was drawn for pupils and teachers. The desired product of this religious education was a God fearing morally upright, industrial individual. As education become popular and mercantile people were demanding for school products with emphasis on shifting from pure religion to the development of skills in language and simple business calculation. Social dimension was introduced

gradually through the formal teaching of good behaviours, morals and manners as school subjects. The desired outcome was a gentle and God fearing people that can be uphold in public.

Another major innovation appeared in 1900 with the teaching of geography and history as a way of guiding the learners towards an understanding of the environment of the colonial masters. This innovation, education became an instrument of imperialism. The modern history of social studies in Nigeria has its roots in the ripples of curriculum innovation which started in Europe in the 1930s. During the colonial period, formal schools were established and subjects in the social area like geography, history, civic and religious knowledge were taught. Education at this period was directed at self consciousness, awareness, discovery and overall development of Nigerian but to serve the interest of the European. Towards the end of colonial period in 1958, the term social studies emerged in the circular of some schools in the defunct western religion.

The post-colonial period has been more eventful regarding the growth and development of social studies in Nigeria. Social studies re-surfaced at the comprehensive High School, Aiyetoro, Egbado in 1963. This school was the product of educational cooperation between the defunct western region and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and produced a textbook in social studies in 1965. Later the textbook was refined by CESAC at University of Lagos. However, in 1964, the Northern Nigeria Teacher Education Project (NNTep) encouraged the education of social studies and produced a textbook on methodology for its teachers. Following the production of social studies textbook in 1965 by CESAC, the social studies textbook in 1965 by CESAC, the Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) was formed in January 1969 at the seminar held at Eleyele, Ibadan. At the same year, 1969, September, the Nigerian national Curriculum conference was organized at the National Hall Lagos and made favorable recommendations for social studies education in Nigeria.

Two important events took place which led to the development of Social Studies in 1969 according observation by Okonkwo (2011) these events are: - The first event was the launching of Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) in January 1969 at co-operative College, Ibadan with the following objectives:

- i. To promote the development of new curriculum in social studies.
- ii. To act as a clearing house for ideas on social studies.
- iii. To encourage the teaching of social studies in Nigerian schools.

The second event was a special conference on curriculum development in mid 1969 that was held at the National Assembly Lagos to examine the issue of ideology, purpose and objectives of Nigerian education. This conference gave birth to the Nigerian Educational Research council (NERC) which has been functioning as an arm of the Federal Ministry of Education immediately after its formation and went into action to develop new curricula for Nigerian schools. NERC organized series of workshop for teachers among which are:

- i. The Nigerian primary school curriculum workshop.
- ii. The Nigerian Teacher Education curriculum workshop 1961
- iii. The Nigerian Secondary Education curriculum workshop, 1972.

New curricula in Social Studies for primary, secondary and teacher education emanated as a result of the series of workshop held between 1971 and 1973. Today all primary schools lower secondary schools, polytechnics, technical colleges as well as universities offer the subject Social Studies respectively. It is observed that the subject Social Studies in Nigeria emanated out of several curriculum conference presided over by great and eminent scholars and frontiers in education particularly social studies and the subject is said to offered at all levels of education in Nigeria with a vacuum created at the senior secondary level. Therefore, in of the opinion that there is need to rethink and unity among the frontiers in education with social studies experts inclusive to develop a curriculum for social studies at the senior secondary level to become a full pledged senior secondary schools subject. Social Studies were introduced in teacher training Colleges (TC 11) in 1988.

It was also introduced into Colleges of Education the early 80s. Expansion and development of Social Studies in Nigerian Universities took shape particularly institute of Education Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria between 1968 to 1970s and the programme was later suspended in 1993/1994 to 2003/2004 . Social Studies was offered at degree level in various Universities in Nigeria

including post graduate programmes in Social Studies at masters (M.Ed) , doctoral (Ph.D) and Professorial levels respectively.

General Objectives of Social Studies

The general objectives of social studies education as an academic discipline according to Dubey and Barth (1980), Obemeta (1983) is aimed at achieving the followings:

- i. Exposing the diverse and ever changing physical and social environment as a whole including its natural resources, together with the rational use and conservation of these resources for development;
- ii. Developing in the learners, the capacity to learn and acquire skills including not only the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing but also of developing the skills of hand together with those of analysis and inference which are important in the formation of sound judgment;
- iii. Developing in children, positive and desirable values of citizenship and the desires in them to make positive contribution to the creation of a united Nigeria; and
- iv. Inculcating in the learners sympathetic views which will enable them to appreciate the diversity and interdependence of all members of the local community and of the wider national and international community.

Objectives of Social Studies in Nigerian Secondary Schools

There are a number of objectives as it relates to the teaching and learning of social studies. The objectives of social studies for post-primary education according to Okonkwo (2009) are to:

- i. make the students aware of the problems of his country and of the world in general, and to appreciate interdependence between people;
- ii. create an awareness and understanding of the evolving social and physical environment, its natural, man-made, cultural and spiritual resources together with the rational use and conservation of these resources for development;
- iii. develop in the students a positive attitude to citizenship and a desire in them to make a positive personal contribution to the creation of a united Nigeria;
- iv. develop a capacity to learn and to acquire skills essentials to the formation of a satisfactory professionals;
- v. develop in the student an appreciation of his cultural heritage, and a desire to preserve it;
- vi. acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value-orientation for the survival of the individual and society; and
- vii. Acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individual to develop into useful members of the community.

National Policy on Education and Social Studies objectives

The aims of Social Studies is consistent with the goals of Nigeria's education as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2009) which includes:

- i. inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- ii. inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- iii. training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- iv. acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and the development of mental, physical and social skills and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

These objectives in many respects reflect in greater details the four educational pillars enunciated by United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (1998), namely: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. Therefore, Social Studies as a discipline help in achieving the stated objectives.

Concept of Curriculum

Curriculum is defined by Indiana Department of Education (2010), as the planned interaction of pupils with instructional content, materials, resources, and processes for evaluating the attainment of educational objectives. According to Coles (2003), a curriculum is a policy statement about a piece of education as a way to indicate the way in which policy is to be realized through a programme of action. Denga (2005) viewed curriculum as planned and unplanned experiences to which learners are

exposed to within and outside school environment for individual and collective growth. Curriculum according to Onwuka (1996) can be viewed from two viewpoints: The traditionalists and progressive viewpoints. According to the traditionalist, curriculum is simply a subject matter, courses of study or planned experiences of the learners under the guidance of the school. The progressive view the curriculum as the guided learning experiences centered on the felt needs of the learners. In other words, it is all the planned and unplanned learning experiences which may be implemented in or out of school but bear direct relevance to effective learning outcome. Considering Onwukas' definition, in whatever form the term curriculum is presented must fall in either traditionalists or progressive perspectives.

Problems of Implementation of Social Studies Curriculum

There are several obstacles against the implementation of Social Studies curriculum in Nigerian schools. Some of these obstacles according Ubah and Shu'aibu (2014) are as follows: Problem of definitions; Social studies as a subject has no universally accepted definition since its inception in America in 1916, Inadequate Social Studies teachers at all levels of education system, the preparation of Social Studies teachers is also substandard.

i. Content Selection: Ubah and Shu'aibu (2014) opined that there are three traditions in Social Studies which include (a) Citizenship education (b) Social science (c) Reflective inquiry. Teachers tend to select their teaching contents based on their own custom and traditions may result to problem to arise.

ii. Problem of Method: Umar (2007) submit that most Social Studies teachers are still friendly with traditional/expository methods at the expense of experimental/inquiry methods which could have helped in achieving the objectives of Social Studies as required in the National Policy on Education.

iii. Inadequacy of suitable social studies textbooks written by the experts in the field.

iv. Teaching aids were grossly inadequate in Nigerian schools and the available ones are not used by the teachers.

v. Degrading Societal Value: The value system is gradually breaking down in our society. Most people value money more than hard work and this is contrary to ideals of social studies.

Prospects of Social Studies Education

The subject Social Studies has the ability to develop in Nigerian citizens' positive values, attitudes, skills and knowledge necessary for the survival of citizens and the society in general. It is hoped that social studies education will inculcate in the citizens high moral standard, social understanding, togetherness, love, respect, tolerance, positive national values, dignity of labour, national consciousness and national unity. Okobia (2004) agreed that social studies curriculum is designed to inculcate in the masses desirable social habits and attitude as well as acquire useful manipulative skills of solving the emerging problems in the society. The prospect of social studies curriculum is predicated upon its capability of presenting partial or even total solutions to multidimensional trafficking, corruption, money laundering, religious and ethnic confrontation HIV/AIDS scourge, terrorism, poverty and hunger.

Conclusion

The paper discussed on the implementation issues as it affects Social Studies curriculum, time has come when lip-service should no more be paid to the implementation issues of Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria both in the areas of quality and quantity of teachers funding, Information Technology demands, qualities and quantities of students entrants and the issue of multi-ethnic realities. It should be noted that these issues can be easily addressed through Social Studies curriculum content for building a virile and democratic culture for the progress of the nation and for the well being of all citizens.

Recommendations

In the light of above discussions on Social Studies curriculum for the benefits of all citizens and Nigeria as a whole, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Teaching of Social Studies in our Schools, Colleges and Universities should be done by graduates of Social Studies education.
- ii. Government should provide adequate funding to education in general and Social Studies curriculum implementation in particular in the area of provision of workshops, Internet services, libraries, teaching aids as well as adequate textbooks.
- iii. Social studies teacher should be computer literate in order to cope with the challenges of Information Communication Technology and Globalization.

- iv. Only those that meet up with the National Commission for Colleges of Education and National University Commission requirements should be given admission to study Social Studies in Nigerian schools.

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