

SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AS A MEANS FOR COMBATING SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of education in Nigeria as in many other developing countries is the preparation of the individual to contribute to the development of the nation and for the transmission of the social and cultural values to new generations. Yet, the Nigerian society has been surrounded by an array of political, economic, and social crises. For this reason, Social Studies is assigned the responsibility to develop in Nigerian youth an understanding of their societal values, knowledge, values, and skills that would enable them to deal with and manage the forces of the world in which they live, and learn how to live harmoniously in the society. This study examines the contents and purposes of the Social Studies education with special reference to its ability to instil high-quality moral values and good character in students and provide them the necessary skills, abilities, and competencies, which individual students require to participate in the development of the nation. It is recommended among others the need for a thorough review of the Social Studies curriculum with emphasis on moral inculcation.

Keywords: *Education, Social Studies, Social Problems and Secondary School*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a developing country that is far behind developed countries, especially in the field of social conduct, including moral values. Social ills among the youth and teenagers are extremely common and have become a critical issue challenging Nigerian society. For this reason, Nigeria needs distinguished, qualified, and informed citizens who possess relevant skills and knowledge to salvage the country from its social, economic, and political crises. In this respect, Nduka (2004) affirmed that the pervasive influence of value disorientation seriously challenges Nigerian individuals and communities. Despite the level of her education, Nigeria is still found wanting in morality, economics, society, and politics. These problems are not peculiar to Nigerian society with other developing countries facing similar social malaises. The majority of teenagers around the world are facing similar social ills, such as drug abuse, teen pregnancy, abortion, alcohol problems, and child abandonment among others.

Presently, every newspaper in Nigeria is filled with stories of a variety of undesirable social ills. These social problems can be found at the local, state, national, and international levels. An effective approach to deliver Nigerians from this moral decay and promote the growth and development of Nigerian society is to restore the Nigerian educational system. This can only be accomplished through social studies education. The moral decay and social ills prevalent in Nigerian society emphasised the need for social studies as a value laden subject to transform Nigerian society.

Social Studies was integrated into the Nigerian school curriculum to restore Nigeria from all sorts of social vices and to encourage Nigerians towards becoming good citizens who would help the country realize her national goals and objectives (Obidoa, 1991; CESAC, 1993; Gabriel, 2008; Gbenga, 2001; Ogunsanya, 1984, Woolman, 2001). Henceforth, social studies is society bound; it is the study of man in relation to his physical and social environment.

The need to show the effectiveness of social studies education in solving the moral dilemma in Nigeria is the main thrust of this research. In realizing this, the paper therefore highlights junior secondary school social studies curriculum for moral development. If the tenets are properly taught, it could help develop positive attitudes of togetherness and cooperation towards a sound and respectable nation through the transmission of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness, justice, and fair play as one's contribution to the development of the nation and the creation of awareness in the learners that discipline is essential for an orderly society.

2.0 PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN NIGERIA SECONDARY SCHOOL

Social Studies were introduced into the Nigerian educational curriculum shortly after its independence to assist in understanding and finding solution(s) to the problems confronting Nigerian society (Woolman, 2001). Social studies education in the Nigerian educational curriculum gives special importance to development of individuals who are responsible and capable of developing the society.

Values are taught in Nigeria through social studies and religious studies as elective subjects at both primary and secondary levels (Gabriel, 2008). Values taught include those relating to the social environment, physical environment, cooperation and conflict, integrity and justice, honesty, tolerance, hard work, service to the people, civil rights and responsibilities, culture and identity, truthfulness and a wise use of resources, cultural patterns, and common heritage and national symbols (Fan Akpan, Martha & Magret, 2008). The specific objectives of the secondary school social studies curriculum in Nigeria are to develop positive attitudes of togetherness, comradeship, and collaboration towards a sound nation (FRN, 1981).

In light of the above, the objective of social studies in Nigeria has to do with the development of socio-civic and personal behaviour. Considering this, Nigerian policy recognizes the importance of social studies, making it a core subject in Nigerian primary and secondary schools and assigns it the responsibility to develop the essential knowledge, values, and skills associated with citizenship. Therefore, social studies at all levels of the education system are tailored towards the realization of Nigerian educational goals.

Consequently, in order to regain a status worthy of society, Nigeria employs an education policy that cultivates a strong sense of citizenship within young people and develops types of citizens appropriate for the country. In respect of this, the Nigerian government has created a policy to develop citizenship through policy statements and social studies in the school curriculum. Given that social studies is a subject that intends to develop knowledge, skills, and moral attitudes in the learners, it is therefore imperative to explore the social studies curriculum to determine if it is providing the right information about our societal values and ideals, and how adequate the curriculum is on moral development and preparing students to face social challenges in the community.

3.0 THE NATURE AND OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL STUDIES

Social studies have a broad scope and often include subjects pertaining to history and geography. In this connection, The National Council for the Social Studies define social studies as “the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence” (NCSS, 1994, P. 7). It becomes obvious from this definition that the general aim of social studies is the promotion of civic awareness. In other words, the purpose of social studies is to offer learners the knowledge essential to participate in the development of the nation. In the same vein, the America Social Studies Committee views social studies as a subject connected to the growth and development of the nation. According to Olatunde (2006), social studies are an approach through which man studies and learns about problems of survival in his environment.

Okunloye (2004) had greatly influenced the recent conception of social studies. He found that the usefulness of social studies is enhanced when it is seen as a way of studying and recognizing social problems and thereby assisting in finding solutions. Adedoyin (1981) referred to social studies as a dynamic subject that reflects change. This keeps it alive as a field of study and flexible and responsive to changes in the society. Therefore, social studies are an integrated programme concerned with those subjects and skills that seem to be uniquely associated with citizenship. Obed (2009) referred to social studies as a programme of general education for the new generation focusing on the study of humans, societal institutions, and human relationship with nature and with one another. Accordingly, several educators have indicated that social studies are the most appropriate subject for citizenship education (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Parker, 2003). Social studies are used by society to inculcate in students, the knowledge, skills,

attitudes, and values that would allow them to live and function effectively as members of the society (Ojedokun, 2001). Thus, social studies curriculum includes citizenship education, which emphasises how individuals develop positive attitudes to their rights, freedom, duties, and obligations as citizens (NPE, 1981).

According to the Nigerian National Policy of Education, the primary objective of social studies is to raise good people and responsible citizens (FRN, 1998). In this same trend, Jekayinfa (1999) expressed that the apparent primary goal of the junior secondary school's social studies syllabus appears to be the provision of knowledge to produce informed citizens who will translate knowledge and attitudes into desirable socio-civic behaviour. Therefore, the primary objectives of social studies education in Nigeria are to help individuals acquire knowledge and values pertaining to their culture and identity to contribute effectively in the development of the society.

4.0 THE PROBLEM OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

In spite of all the benefits that may accrue from social studies education as stated above, it is worth mentioning that social studies education has not been fully accorded its prime objectives in transforming the society. Thus, the ingredients for social studies in the curriculum have failed to enable students to develop an understanding of their societal values and knowledge, and values and skills that would enable them to deal with social problems. Iheoma (1985) explained why school subjects have perhaps not achieved the aims of transmitting moral and societal values in the youths. He stated that the current methods and techniques adopted for moral education in Nigerian schools are inadequate to cope with moral crises in the society. This essentially calls for reorganizing our junior secondary school's social studies curriculum for moral and value development. There should be more emphasis on these aspects in all facets of the curriculum. Through these efforts, social ills among the youths and teenagers could be reduced.

Accordingly, Jekayinfa (1999) noticed that non-involvement of the curriculum in senior secondary level hinders the full achievement of the aims and objectives of social studies towards preparing the learners to be humane, rational, skilful in decision making, and participating and responsible citizens in a world that is becoming complex and interdependent.

In this regard, the researcher recommends the need for a thorough review of the social studies curriculum and provides a provision for moral inculcation. Social studies should focus more on those aspects which are crucial to value inculcation. In this respect, moral inculcation in students is deemed compulsory for teachers throughout their teaching process. Therefore, to inculcate good moral values in students as well as instil skills and knowledge to fight against the moral decay of our society, social studies should be included in our senior secondary school curriculum.

Similarly, the researcher also recommends for social studies education to realize its ultimate goal, efforts should also be made for teacher training, seminars, forums, and workshops to familiarize teachers with the curriculum and to upgrade teacher efficiency.

Lastly, the implementation of the social studies curriculum is enfolded with flaws that prevent it from accomplishing its ultimate goal to cultivate good moral conduct in students, positive knowledge, skills, and character building. Thus, the social studies curriculum needs to be improved by presenting a curriculum that is value based. There must be a paradigm shift in the curriculum development. Social studies curriculum should focus on constructing moral personality which requires many strategies and techniques in teaching methods, skills, and knowledge to create and sustain social values.

5.0 MORAL PROBLEMS AND SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

Many efforts have been made at different levels to reform Nigerian society. The National Policy on Education explains education concerning the social and attitude formation. The Nigerian educational philosophies are:

1. The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen.
2. The full integration of the individual into the community (NPE, 2004).

The efforts of the government of Nigeria to implement these policies are channelled through social studies and moral education. As such, social studies in Nigeria is specifically included in the school curriculum to help Nigerians achieve the goal of becoming good citizens capable of supporting the country in achieving her national goals and objectives (Adaralegbe, 1980; Obidoa, 1991; Ogunsanya, 1984; and CESAC, 1993).

Social studies was introduced into the secondary school curriculum in order to inculcate the right types of values, critical and problem solving skills, and the values required to live a successful life and promote the sustainable development of the country. The problems, which serve as a hindrance to the accomplishment of the objectives set for these subjects, include lack of instructional materials, adequate time, and teachers involvement in curriculum development, poor or no-motivation for teachers, corruption by law enforcement agents and politicians, and the inconsistencies of government policies with regard to education (Adesina, 2010; Bennel, 2004). However, civic education has recently been introduced to the school system in Nigeria as a measure to curb social ills (Ojedokun, Adesina & Adeyemi, 2010).

To this end, curriculum planners and educators have written many curricula with the hope of including content that will develop students with the knowledge needed for active participatory membership of their society and high moral standards, in addition to preparing them to face social challenges in the globalized world. Social studies is a good

subject in this regard. The major purpose of its introduction in the Nigerian educational system is to train Nigerian youths to contribute to the nation (Adesina, 2010). As such, national curriculum conferences, seminars, research, symposia, discussions, and workshops are organized periodically at different levels.

It is, however, unfortunate that present contemporary Nigerians display signs of severe moral decay. Consequently, there is general concern regarding the nation's moral problems. Current approaches to moral education in Nigeria are inadequate to cope with this moral crisis. The display of immoral acts capable of triggering disagreements leading to conflict, social unrest, or political disunity, persistently occurs. Such disorder shows why the teaching of existing school subjects and the efforts in our schools remain insufficient to inculcate the right type of values and attitudes among the youths and teenagers in the country to embrace peace and cordial coexistence with one another.

6.0 SOCIAL ILLS AMONG TEENAGERS IN NIGERIA

Presently, there are vast numbers of social ills among teenagers worldwide, including Nigeria. Teenagers are facing similar social ills such as drug abuse, bullying, abortion, alcohol problems, free sex and others. In Nigeria, some predominant social issues include drug abuse, rape, robbery, cultism, vandalism and other immoral acts that are dangerous to the home, community, schools, and the nation. Some of these problems are related to one another. The act of smoking in some cases has led to drug abuse such as marijuana, heroin, and morphine. Teenagers' alcohol consumption and tobacco smoking enhance the risk of using other drugs. These activities may possibly lead to unintended sexual activities, which may cause unwanted pregnancies, abortion, and baby dumping among teenagers. Akanji and Dada (2012) asserted that the abuse of children has become a platform for the problem of teenage pregnancy among female children in Nigeria.

Accordingly, Okpani and Okpani (2000) wrote concerning the decline in the age of sexual experience among adolescents contrary to accepted moral and cultural values. They observed that this is a dangerous trend which affects the educational system and the society at large. According to Akingba (1992), the estimated account for inducing abortion is currently between 20,000 to 50,000 maternal annual deaths in Nigeria. This could be the reason why Uchechukwu (2011, p. 14) wrote, "If one goes by the multifarious social problems plaguing the Nigerian society in recent times, one will appreciate the urgent need for the school to wade in and give parents a helping hand in the appropriate education on issues concerning sex early in life".

It is possible that the increasing social problems among teenagers in Nigeria are a manifestation of their unemployment. In support of this assertion, Akosile (2007) explained that there is incessant violence across the nation because too many youths are unemployed. It seems that the level of poverty in Nigeria accounts for the violence among

teenagers due to such problems as unemployment, inadequate housing, poor physical, and social infrastructures (Obateru, 1994). If not addressed, this situation will lead to the loss of the next generation and future leaders of the country.

Moreover, Nigerian society is deteriorating little by little. The high degree of social problems in Nigeria calls for urgent review of our education, particularly social studies education to realize the primary aims and objectives for which education is intended. Thus, a continuous nurturing of moral values will make the individuals responsive of their responsibilities to themselves, their environment, society, and the nation at large.

7.0 PROBLEMS MILITATING AGAINST THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES OBJECTIVES IN NIGERIA

Social studies education is a subject that develops in learners the right type of values and attitudes that are needed to create a peaceful and sustainable society. Social studies education teaches values that would enable peaceful social integration in students. Values like maintenance of discipline, respect for law and order, recognition of the principles of cultural relativity and the effect of cultural ethnocentrism, respect for other people's rights, formation of social competency, and citizenship education (Adesina & Odedeji, 2011). These values are important factors in the human relationship with society and essential for the development of the individuals as contributing members in the society.

Social studies was integrated in the Nigerian school curriculum as a subject that intends to assist in understanding and finding solution(s) to the problems confronting the Nigerian society (Obidoa, 1991; CESAC, 1993; Gabriel, 2008; Gbenga, 2001; Ogunsanya, 1984; Woolman, 2001). The basic structure of junior secondary school social studies curriculum in Nigeria consists of the aims and objectives of the subject, appropriate selection of teaching aids, textbooks and techniques to be used to achieve the aims as illustrated in their response during the semi-structured interview. According to Kelly (2009), curriculum planning requires specifying the objectives and planning the content and the methods that will lead towards achieving the objectives.

Although the curriculum is well designed and makes provision for a variety of activities, the social studies curriculum has still not fully achieved its primary objective to inculcate moral values in the learners because of previously indicated factors. Thus, this study has found that there were some factors that contributed to the teachers' failure in the implementation of the curriculum for character and attitude formation. Social studies was introduced into the school system in Nigeria to inculcate moral characters and attitudes in the students so that they would become responsible citizens. Problems and barriers against the accomplishment of the goals set for social studies education are poor teaching methods, over population, poor motivation, corruption by law enforcement agents and politicians, and the inconsistencies of government policies with regard to education

(Adesina, 2010), politics of ethnicity and political cleavages (Alapiki & Ibodje, 1996, Alapiki & Barikor, 2002), and the pervasive influence of colonization (Ademoyega, 1981; Enegwewa & Umoden, 1993; Alapiki, 2005).

The available evidence points to the fact that lack of material resources hinders the successful implementation of the curriculum for both skills and values in students. To improve the quality of social studies and to inculcate moral values in the students through the curriculum, there should be adequate material resources for social studies teachers in all schools. The evidence from this study has shown that due to the lack or shortage of instructional materials in Nigerian junior secondary schools, teaching materials are urgently required. This and other related studies found that the lack of adequate motivation for teachers and insufficient material resources gave students little opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills, values, and attitudes required to sustain and improve their way of life and actively participate in the development of the society. Inadequate resources confirm what some educators have argued that lack of resources influences teachers' decisions in the classrooms (Chapin & Messick, 2002). Consequently, Nigerian secondary teachers have not fully implemented the curriculum effectively because of serious shortages in resources (Onyeachu, 2008).

Although the main objectives of social studies is to promote good citizens and nation builders, the subject remains surrounded by a lack of transparency, incoherence, and contradiction that further confound the problem (NCSS, 2009). As established in literature, the junior secondary school's social studies syllabus was too broad and ambiguous for junior secondary students (Kizlik, 2013; Abudu Kabir, 2013). These evidences indicate that the social studies curriculum used in Nigerian schools is too broad and difficult for some students to comprehend. In other words, there are too many topics to be covered within a short period that there is literally no time to integrate moral or societal values in the teaching and learning processes.

Teacher involvement in the curriculum development process is of great importance, "either in the definition of the problems or the presentation of concrete solutions in the form of programs of studies" (Ben- Peretz, 1980, p. 1). Non-involvement of teachers in curriculum planning and decision-making would lead to ineffective implementation and diminish teaching and learning processes (Nigeria Education Sector Diagnosis, 2005). However, the study by AbuduKabir, (2013) and other research like Adewuya (2013) and Onyeachu (2008) found that teachers who are crucial agents in interpreting and implementing the curriculum were not involved in the curriculum development process in Nigeria. They opined that this may lead to teacher misconceptions and misinterpretation of the purpose of the subject. This could possibly be the reason why Onyeachu (2008) said that, "for the set objectives of secondary education to be achieved, teachers must be involved in decision-making and planning of curriculum" (p. 568)

Similarly, Abudu Kabir (2013) and other related studies found that social studies was not included in the senior secondary school in Nigeria which hinders the subject's ability to achieve its aims and objectives in learners. As Jekayinfa (1999) put it:

Non-involvement of the curriculum in senior level has not enhanced full realization of the objectives of Social Studies towards preparing the learners to be humane, rational, skillful in decision making, participating and responsible citizens in a world that is becoming complex and interdependent (p. 6).

The inability to implement the curriculum in senior secondary schools according to Jekayinfa was due to some errors or omissions of some important aspects that distort the final document (1999). Therefore, to inculcate good moral values in students as well as instil skills and knowledge to fight against the moral decay of our society, social studies should be included in our senior secondary school curriculum. Similarly, analysis of the curriculum also reveals that concepts on moral inculcation were not well-integrated. Such concepts included cooperation and conflict, civic rights and responsibilities, good relations, fundamental human rights, virtues, justice, conflict resolutions, cultural aspects, and individual roles and responsibilities in the society.

Thus, the high degree of social problems rampant among youths and teenagers in Nigeria calls for urgent review of our education system, particularly social studies to realize the primary aims and objectives for which the education is intended. Consequently, it is hoped that students at the end of the courses should be able to develop the right type of attitude and learn more about their society and embrace peaceful co-existence among the members of the society.

8.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is hereby concluded that for successful implementation of the social studies curriculum and to realize its aims and objectives in Nigeria and as a genuine means of accomplishing the educational objective of instilling societal values, emphasis should be given to character and personality development, good virtues and conduct, and knowledge and skills that would sustain the individuals and the Nigerian society.

Again, if social studies should help students develop positive attitudes, ethics, values, and moral principles that will make them good and involved members of the society, the current social studies curriculum should be reviewed and emphasis should be laid on those subjects that will foster children's intellectual, ethical, and social development. Similarly, if the social studies curriculum is to be successfully implemented in our junior secondary schools as well as achieve the ultimate goal imbibing values in Nigerian society, both government and policy makers should create opportunities for teachers to participate in curriculum planning. This will in turn lead to achievements of the

aims and objectives of the subject to develop basic skills, knowledge, values, and good attitudes in the learners.

For social studies education to realize its ultimate goal, efforts should be made for teacher training, seminars, forums, and workshops to familiarize teachers with the curriculum and to improve teacher competence and provide them with relevant materials. Teachers should be empowered and exposed to a variety of ways of improving their own knowledge and skills. Finally, the government needs to compensate teachers by paying good salaries and allowances to facilitate teaching and learning and inculcate good morals in students, as is being done in other sectors of the economy.

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