

# **EMERGENCE OF CONTEMPORARY AREAS IN SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA: A CHALLENGE TO EDUCATORS**

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## **Abstract**

*Social Studies was introduced into the Nigerian educational scene as a potent tool for entrenching citizenship education on members of the society. It equips the learners with symbiotic interactive skills to enable him or her to adapt, adjust, cope and contribute meaningfully to the betterment of the society. This paper examines the emergence of some contemporary arrears in social studies curriculum in Nigeria, such as population and family life education, value education, HIV/AIDS education, accident prevention and safety education, feminist education, citizenship education, law related education, environmental education, peace education and women education. It also highlights the challenges of these areas to social studies education. The paper therefore recommends that government, multi-national companies, philanthropic organizations, public spirited individuals and school heads should assist social studies teachers in getting quick access to current information that will make them to be up to date in their lesson delivery in the classroom, as well as exposing them to regular workshops and seminars on contemporary issues in the society*

Social Studies is relatively a novel curriculum in primary and secondary schools, colleges of education and universities in Nigeria, Social Studies found practical expression into the school system after the 1969 National curriculum conference (Osakwe, 2009). The outcome of this all-important conference led to the introduction of the National policy on education (NPE). The National Policy on education (1977) revised in 1981, 1989, 1998 and 2004 provides the basis for the inclusion of some subjects as well as Social Studies in the school curriculum of Nigeria (Odogbor, 2008) The Introduction of Social Studies into the Nigerian school system stemmed from the dire need to tailor education to the positive needs and aspirations of all Nigerians irrespective of status, age, tongue, religion or creed.

Social Studies can be defined as an integrated field of study that attempts to study man in-depth within the ramification of his dynamic environment, as well as equipping him with positive knowledge, attitudes, values and adaptive interactive skills for the purpose of producing a socio-civically competent, humane and effective citizenry who can contribute positively to the good of the society. The focus of Social Studies therefore is essentially man, the society and the environment and its ultimate goal is to equip individuals with knowledge and understanding for effective relationship and living (Okojie, 2006).

The world is constantly undergoing changes and Social Studies remains a veritable instrument for examining these changes, whether they be positive or negative (Osakwe, 2009). This implies that any change that emerges in the society are being incorporated into Social Studies curriculum for appropriate solution. This development thus makes Social Studies curriculum content to be flexible, divergent, boundless, limitless, macroscopic, broad or extensive because of the addition of contemporary areas that affect man in the society. Thus, when it is very easy to delineate the scope/content of other school subjects or disciplines, that of Social Studies cannot be delineated because it is not static. It changes with regards to variables of place, time and studies of human development.

This dynamic nature of Social Studies curriculum no doubt poses some challenges to Social Studies educators who are saddled with the implementation agenda of the subject in the classroom. This is against the background that some of these educators might not have been exposed to these emerging curriculum content areas of the subject in the course of their training. This paper therefore examines the emergence of contemporary area in Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria, and the challenges it poses on educators.

### **Emergence of Contemporary Areas in Social Studies Curriculum in Nigeria**

Social Studies touches on every facet of human existence: man himself as a product of nature and social man as a product of nature, arising from the social, political, economic and physical environment (Osakwe, 2009). Some contemporary areas that have emerged in recent times in Social Studies curriculum are as follows:

#### **(a) Population and Family Life Education**

Population and family life education looks at the interrelationship between population growth rate vis-à-vis available resources at micro and macro level, appreciates its challenges as they impede national growth and development, with a view of inculcating in learners a more positive and responsible behaviour cum mind set towards small family size that will culminate in an improved standard of living and life longevity. As much as it is obvious that having children is crucial

and gives external meaning to marriage, it is desirable for parents to understand that equal value of having only those children for whom they can provide adequate care, nutrition, shelter, education and clothing are important (Idibie and Ochonogor, 2003).

**(b) Value Education**

Mezieobi (1996) expressed the view that there is no behaviour response no matter the mode or pattern e.g rationalization, prioritization, preference, philosophy of life, socialization etc. which is not guided by values perception at any given time or place. Ehindero (1986) cited by Iyamah (2004) adumbrated that the value patterns of a society is organized and directed, thus a nation prescribes values which represent the ideas or thoughts which dictate or guide action, behaviour, attitude, policies and practices. These include justice, liberty, equality, respect for individual rights and property, honesty, fair play, hard work, uprightness, faithfulness and tolerance (Akpan, 2005). Learners should be made to imbibe these lofty values since they are very crucial for nation building and particularly for the current rebranding agenda in the country, which goes with the slogan-Nigeria, good people, great nation.

**(c) HIV/AIDS Education**

HIV (Human Immune Deficiency Virus) which is a retrovirus that leads to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is a fatal disease that has affected the entire human race, with Nigeria ranking 3<sup>rd</sup> in the number of persons with AIDS in the world. As the epidemic spreads, its micro level impacts are being replicated to the extend that the cumulative impacts are affecting society, the economy and the biophysical environments at the macro level, particularly on the African content (Utulu and Utulu, 2005).

**(d) Accident Prevention and Safety Education**

Accident is any unplanned occurrence which usually results to unintended injury, death or property damage. Accident can occur at any time and place, even when one least expects it. Safety education is that area of experiment through which people learn to make wise choices when the possibility of injury to one's self or others is involved (Ibeagha, 200). Prevention is said to be better than cure, it is carelessness that causes most accidents, and therefore, they can be prevented through the knowledge of accident prevention and safety education.

**(e) Feminist Education**

Feminist Education equips the learners with arrays of information that are related to female sexuality education with a focus on the development, growth, the anatomy and physiology of the female reproductive system and changes that can

occur from infancy to adulthood. It also involves learning to fit sexuality into a pattern of behaviour which allows the person to function as a responsible member of the society (Ibeagha, 2000).

**(f) Citizenship Education**

Nigeria as a nation is blessed with abundant human and material resources. In spite of these blessings, Nigeria is problem glut. Such characteristics as dishonesty, distrust, injustice, lack of commitment to duty, abuse of office, tribalism, poor leadership, corruption, electoral fraud, denial of legitimate right etc are the problems of Nigeria today. Citizenship education has been considered to be the most appropriate instrument through which the ills of the society can be addressed. This is because, as observed by Ezegebe, (1989), Citizenship Education is the only medium through which Nigeria citizens could be helped to become good citizens capable of and willing to contribute to the development of the society. Through Citizenship Education, the Social Studies Students become participating members of the community, with a positive attitude and mind set towards the development of their society and a zeal to contribute their very best to the progress of the society where they live.

**(g) Law Related Education**

One of the most important social institutions in any human society is the law. One needs to be acquainted with the laws governing the land in order to exhibit acceptable character cum behaviour. Fadeiye, Asifatu and Banikole, (2006) posits that it is one of the devices by means of which men can recognize their actual activities and behaviours with the ideal principles that have come to stay, and can do it in a way that is not too painful or revolting to their sensibility and in a way which allows ordered social life to continue.

**(h) Environment Education**

The thrust of environmental education is anchored on the creation of awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, evaluation, ability and participation of citizenry on environmental issues. Aptly put, environmental education is designed to develop a citizenry that is aware of and concerned about the totality of the environment and its related problems. Awareness is conceived as a way of understanding the environment, looking after, and feeling towards it, in an effective way (Inyang-Abia and Umoren, 1995).

**(i) Peace Education**

Peace Education is an aspect of total education of the individual and the group, which relate to the promoting of peace and discouragement of crises (James, 2001). Social Studies in some countries are styled as peace education. It refers to

those aspects of education formal and non-formal, in school and out of school, directed at entrenching crises free society. The absence of crises may or may not ensure peace, it could be regarded as negative or neutral peace, while a situation of love and caring can be described as positive peace, peace is said, to be a style of life, a mental attitude, a state of equilibrium (Maduewesi, 1997).

**(j) Women Education**

This is an educational arrangement for the girl-child within the age bracket of school going age to 19 years, who were not opportuned to obtain formal education that will make them fit positively, comfortably and productively like their male counterparts at younger age. The education of the girl-child had for a very long time been neglected, while that of the male-child was favoured or preferred. There is need for mass literacy programme to avail all women of equal educational opportunities irrespective of their age, locality, creed or social status, and to educate parents on the need for girl-child education (Apan, 2005).

**Contemporary Areas of Social Studies Curriculum: The Challenges to Social Studies Educators**

Social Studies Teachers in Nigeria are faced with a lot of challenges. Some of the major ones are discussed as follows:

**(a) Paucity of Resources**

Paucity of resources is a major hindrance to the Social Studies teacher in Nigeria. Resources needed for the effective teaching of Social Studies include community resources, human resources, technological resources and instructional resources. It is a well known fact that most of the resources are either not available or when available, are not adequate due to the paucity of funds (Iyela, 2005). This is a major challenge to the Social Studies teacher during lesson delivery in the classroom.

**(b) Inadequate Source of Information**

A great percentage of Social Studies teachers especially those in the rural areas do not have access to current source of information like internet, radio, television, news papers, magazines and current textbooks. Social Studies is very dynamic and thus requires up to date information by way of searching for current information through voracious reading and staying glued to radio, television and internet . The high cost of procuring these materials makes it virtually impossible for most schools to obtain them to teach ( Odogbor and Oyibo, 2007)

### **Lack of in-service Training for Teachers**

It is a truism that Social Studies from all indications is undergoing innovation in order to be in tune with the needs and aspirations of individuals in the society. However, there are some administrative hitches which impede the agenda, for instance, there is the absence of deliberate policy whereby teachers are made to update their knowledge on current or contemporary issues. This situation constitutes a big hindrance to acquiring current information that is vital in Social Studies curriculum.

However, the challenges faced by Social Studies educator can be overcome if the recommendations below can be adopted by government and other stakeholders in the education enterprise.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has examined the emergence of contemporary areas in Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria, the challenges it has posed on Social Studies educators, as well as some useful recommendations that will bring these challenges to below whisper level.

### **Recommendations**

In order to avert the challenges facing Social Studies educators as a result of the emergence of contemporary areas in Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria, the following recommendations are imperative:

1. Government at all levels, multi-national companies, philanthropic organizations, public spirited individuals, etc. should assist schools in the provision of resources for effective teaching of Social Studies.
2. School heads should assist Social Studies educators in getting easy access to current information, by providing radio, television, newspapers, magazines. textbooks and internet facilities for their teachers.
3. Social Studies educators should be exposed to seminars and workshops bordering on emerging areas in Social Studies curriculum, in order to make them current in their teaching.

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