

REPOSITIONING SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN NIGERIA SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS: THE MISSING LINK

Dr(Mrs-) Oledinma P. Nwanna-Nzewunwa

Abstract

The importance of teaching Social Studies in Schools cannot be overemphasized. The merit of teaching social studies is that, it would provide pupils with problem-solving attitude. An examination of subject offering in the *National Policy on Education* "revealed that provision was made for social studies at the Senior Secondary School Level. But the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO), for reason not made obvious, dropped social studies in the subjects offered at the Senior Secondary level, but Tertiary Institutions offer the subject. This situation creates a gap in the development of social studies in Nigeria since it is only at this level that the subject is not offered.

Introduction

The *National Policy on Education* (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN (2004) defined secondary education as "the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. Section 5(21) gave the broad goals of secondary education as; to prepare the individual for (a) useful living within the society; and (b) higher education. While section 5(22) identified the specific goals of secondary education. It states that in specific terms secondary education shall;

- (a) provide all school leavers with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background
- (b) offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles.
- (c) provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades
- (d) foster National unity with an emphasis on common ties that write us in our diversity
- (e) raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feeling of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those, values specified under our broad national goals and lives as good citizens.
- (0) provide technical knowledge and vocational skill necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.

The policy went on say in its section 5(23) that; to achieve the stated goals, secondary education shall be of six years duration, given in two stages-Junior secondary school stage and a senior secondary school stage; each shall be of three years duration. Kochhar (1988:2) noted that social studies committee for schools Board, Victoria defined social studies as:

What we study in life of man in some particular time. We therefore, use every possible 'subject' to help us understand man's problem and how he dealt or deals with them; man's struggle with his environment yesterday and today; man's use of misuse of his powers and resources, his development and the essential unity of civilization. These are the main themes of social studies.

(Michaelis) in Nwanna-Nzewunwa and Okoh (2001:2)

Concerned with man and his interaction with his social and physical environment: they deal with human relationships. The central function of social studies is identical the central purpose of education-the development of democratic citizenship.

It is perhaps in view of the latter that the *National Policy of Education* (FRN, 2004) noted that Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on the integration of the individual into a sound effective citizen.

The policy also stated that the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards inculcating the following values: (1) Respect for the worth and dignity of individuals (2) Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions (3) Moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relations. (4) Shared responsibility for the common good of the society. (5) Respect for the dignity of labour (6) Promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children (FRN, 2004).

The policy further stated that for the philosophy of education to be in harmony with the Nigerians' national objectives, it has to be geared towards self-realization, better human, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress.

Objectives of Social Studies

Social studies has both general and specific objectives. General objectives of social studies which are stated in terms of long-term goals help the students to understand their place at home with their environment and places them in a very good position to solve all their environmental problems. While specific objectives may be grouped under knowledge objective (cognitive), Affective and psycho-motor domains. Cognitive objective appraises the learners' ability to recall the knowledge and information or learning experiences presented to the students by the teacher. The affective domain relates to attitude and values that students imbibe or develop after being exposed to certain learning experiences in social studies. The psychomotor involves the development of certain skills needed to be the student a creative, active and a functioning member of his society.

The Values and Historical Development of Social Studies in Nigeria

Social studies as a subject worthy of attention and of being studied "derive from its potentials for achieving certain desirable goals of general education in the country"¹¹ also points out some of the misconceptions of the social studies as a subject. One of such misconceptions which is relevant to this paper is that social studies is "a synonym (sic) for social studies". However, (Wesley and Wronski) in Nwanna-Nzewunwa. 2004, clearly spell out the difference when they posited that:

Social sciences are concerned with the detailed, systematic and logical study of human relationships... The obligation (of the materials) is to the standards of scholarship... to the society as a whole rather than to students and pupils... (They) may or may not be suitable for instructional purposes... Social studies are designed primarily for instructional purposes... portions of the social sciences selected and adapted for use in the schools or in their instructional situations. Further comments by Social studies and social sciences clearly spell out the difference between and also brings out one of the values of social studies thus: .. .Social studies and social sciences 'draw their content from the same source of information, namely, studies of the society. But they have different intellectual goals and objectives. Social sciences are for scholarship, while social studies is for purpose of instruction.

Dike (1989:5) spells out five simple questions, which may be of interest of social studies. These questions touch on almost all aspects of man, his culture, his environment, his method of survival in his environment etc. According to him: Social studies does not stop at only studying man's interactions and interrelationship with his social and physical environment. Social studies is also interested in studying the impact of science and physical environments.

He also cites the satisfaction of man's need as a basis for the study of social studies. In Nigeria, social studies "has always been that of (sic) a tool for fostering national unity and citizenship and for teaching of social values. It also makes education more relevant to the society through teaching students to develop the spirit of unity in diversity, religious tolerance, cultural heritage and promoting of social education" (Akpan 2001).

Historical Development of Social Studies in Nigeria

Before discussing the development of social studies in Nigeria, it would be noted that Fadeyiye (1981:1)*records that social studies had its origin in America, where the subject was taught in schools and colleges through "the efforts of the American Committee of the National Education Association". This is confirmed by Akpan (2001) who states that:

Social studies is of American origin. It entered the American curriculum as a result of a major change in thinking about the nature and purpose of science and education. It was introduced into the school curriculum with a view to giving social and political education to young Americans and as a major

instrument for fostering unity.

Britain also, later, introduced social studies into its school system. According to Akpan (2001), Social studies as a subject became important in Britain almost at the same (time) as it was taught in America. Other European countries also joined the new wave of social education after the Second World War. This was as a result of the need to socialize and rehabilitate their citizen and evolve a new discipline capable of promoting national and international understanding.

Today, social studies is studied in many countries of the world including those in Africa and especially in Nigeria. In Nigeria, social studies was first taught in Comprehensive High School, Aiyetoro, where, the United State Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Ford Foundation sponsored the programme. There had been serious concern about the type of education given to Nigerians by the missionaries and the colonial masters, which was found inadequate for the proper development of the country. For this reason, the Nigerian Educational Research Council in 1969 sponsored a National Curriculum Conference, the aim of which among other things was the provision of a curriculum adequate for Nigeria and the restructuring of the whole educational system to meet the needs of present and future Nigerians.

One of the major outcomes of this conference was the decision to review our educational development regularly and in response* to the latter a seminar, which focused on all aspects of a National Policy on Education, was organized in 1973 under the chairmanship of S.O. Adebayo. The government's response to the seminar and 1969 curriculum conference was the birth of the whole white paper titled *The National Policy on Education*, 1977 revised 1988, 1998 and 2004. Besides, the conference led to the production of a National Curriculum in all school subjects including Social Studies. One can therefore safely conclude that the National Curriculum Conference of 1969 led to the introduction of social studies into the school curriculum in Nigeria.

However, since the introduction of social studies in our school system, the focus were the primary and Junior Secondary Schools. At the Senior Secondary School there is a missing link as the subject is not offered at this level, as integrated subject but the various disciplines that make up social studies are taught as single subjects, for example, Geography, History, Economics, Government etc. At the tertiary level especially in Colleges of Education and Faculties of Education in some Conventional Universities. It is also being taught as various disciplines. There is therefore, the need to include social studies in the Senior Secondary School Curriculum. This will make for continuity as the subject is a core subject already in the Junior Secondary School Curriculum and no student who fails social studies at this level is allowed to proceed to the Senior Secondary School.

Importance of Social Studies

The introduction of social studies as one of the core subjects in the Junior Secondary School Curriculum in Nigerian educational system portrays its importance. As was earlier mentioned, the subject is a new trend in our educational system. The importance of social studies to religion and political stability, cultural, economic and technological development of Nigeria cannot be over emphasized.

Nwanwa-Nzewunwa and Okoh 2002:3 recorded that;

the fact that social studies enjoys the status of a core subject implies that it is perceived as a very important worthy of being studied by all student. This perceived Importance derives from the potentials of the subject for achieving certain desirable goals of general education in the country.

However, the above views of Nwanwa-Nzewunwa and Okoh is possibly ignored in Senior Secondary School curriculum in Nigeria as no school or examination body in Nigeria included social studies as a subject rather its component parts such as Government, History, Religion, Geography, Economics to mention a few are offered as social science single subjects thereby creating a gap between secondary school and tertiary education social studies.

The merit of teaching social studies is that it would provide pupils with a problem-solving attitude. Fedeye (1981:2) observed that the need for social integration and national unity in Nigeria is prime importance. He further states that social studies offers ample opportunities for the promotion of the much

needed national unity in our countries. Social studies is taught in schools because it provides pupils with the understanding of man's way of life, his basic needs and activities in which he engages, in order to meet his needs. They further posit that the subject is taught in schools because it would help to inculcate in pupils/students direct training in citizenship. In social studies we learn about the lives of achievers and great men. They serve as models for the younger generation.

Social studies help the pupils and students to have respect for constitution, authority, law and order in the society. Social studies will help pupils and student appreciate their own culture than that of others and also respect the dignity of man and labour. The subject also helps them to understand the value of cooperation, effective citizenships, national unity and interdependence within their community and the other communities that are their neighbours.

The pupils and students are taught at school to learn to interact positively within the family, the school and the society at large. They develop a sense of self-consciousness, which makes them to develop respect for self and others. This makes them to adapt to new situation easily and to cooperate with more members of their society. When pupils/students learn about man and his environment, they learn the language, good habits, mode of dressing, skills, values and norms of their community and other communities. They also learn that no man or community is self-sufficient and that for survival of an individual, community and national development we have to depend on exchange of goods and services between ourselves and between one nation and the other, thereby learning to directly emphasise peaceful co-existence among people of the world irrespective of religions, culture and race.

The policy further stated that every student shall offer the following;

- (i) a minimum of 10 and maximum of 13 subjects
- (ii) all subjects in group A;
- (iii) at least one subject each from groups B&C.

Group A: Core

1. English (2) French (3) Mathematics (4) Language of environment to be taught as LI (5) One major Nigerian Language other than that of the environment to be taught as L2 (6) Integrated Science (7) Social Studies and Citizenship Education (8) Introductory Technology.

The language of environment shall be taught as LI where it has orthography and literature. Where it does not have, it shall be taught with emphasis on orature as L2.

Group B: Pre-vocational electives

(1) Agriculture (2) Business Studies (3) Home Economics (4) Local Crafts (5) Computer

Education. Emphasis on subjects in Group B shall be on practice.

Group C: Non-Prevocational electives

- (1) Religious knowledge
- (2) Physical and Health Education
- (3) Fine Art
- (4) Music
- (5) Arabic

(b) Students who complete junior secondary school shall be streamed (i) the senior secondary school; (ii) the technical college; (iii) an out-of-school vocational training center; (iv) an apprenticeship scheme.

The streaming shall be based on the result of tests to determine academic aptitude and vocational interest: and as much as possible to achieve a trade of 60:20:10 as follows:

The senior secondary school - 60%, the technical college 20%; the vocational training center 10%; the apprenticeship scheme 10%.

Senior Secondary School

- (a) the senior secondary school shall be comprehensive with a core subject signed to broaden pupils' knowledge and out-look.
- (b) Every student shall take all the seven (7) core subjects in group with a minimum of one and a maximum of

two from the list of elective subjects B and C to give a minimum of eight and a maximum of nine subjects.

(c) one of the three elective subjects may be dropped in the last secondary school course.

Group A: Core

(1) English Language (2) French language (3) Mathematics (4) A major Nigerian Language (5) One of Biology, Chemistry, Physics or Integrated Science (6) One of Literature-in-English, History, Geography or Social Studies (7) A vocational subject.

Group B: Vocation Electives

(1) Agriculture (2) Applied Electricity (3) Auto-Mechanics (4) Book-keeping and Accounting (5) Building Construction (6) Commerce (7) Computer Education (8) Electronics (9) Clothing and Textiles (10) Food and Nutrition (11) Home Management (12) Metal Work (13) Technical Drawing (14) Woodwork (15) Shorthand (16) Typewriting (17) Fine Art (18) Music.

Group C: Non-Vocational Electives

(I) Biology (2) Chemistry (3) Physics (4) Further Mathematics (5) Integrated Science (6)

Health Education (7) Physical Education (8) Literature-in-English (9) History (10) Geography

(II) Social Studies (12) Bible Knowledge (13) Islamic Studies (14) Arabic (15) Government

(16) Economics (17) Any Nigerian Language that has orthography and Literature etc.

National Policy on Education section 4(23) made provision for the social studies at the senior secondary school level. But the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) for reason not made obvious dropped social studies in their subject offerings at the level under study. It is not that policy makers in the field of education, the Federal Ministries of Education, Principals of Schools and social studies teachers are not aware of this issue, but WAEC and NECO dictate the subjects offered. But there is a need to include social studies (which is a new subject in the senior secondary terminal examination since subjects like History, Government, Religion, Geography, Economics etc which are components of social studies are already offered in WAEC. For a NECO official who was interviewed NECO adopt WAEC subject offering and did not see the need to include social studies which is broad based and requires a lot of reading before a student passes the subject.

The above situation creates a gap or break in the development of social studies in Nigeria since it is only at this level that the subject is not offered. Students in tertiary Institution study social studies without the knowledge of senior secondary school social studies. As a matter of fact, one of the requirements of the NCE or undergraduate social studies is that a student should make a credit in WAEC or NECO examinations.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the objectives of Social Studies. The value and historical development of Social Studies in Nigeria. It went further to identify the need for students to offer social studies at the Senior Secondary School level in Nigeria. Recommendation

1. The gap created by lack of social studies in the Senior secondary school curriculum should be closed by inclusion of social studies in WAEC/NECO."
2. Adequate facilities, teachers and infrastructures should be provided for the teaching and learning of social studies at all levels of our educational system especially at the senior secondary school level.

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