



## **Inculcating the Right Attitude to Life Among Nigerian Youths: The Need for Social Studies Curriculum Review**

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### **Abstract**

Nigeria as a nation witnessed a myriad of social upheavals that have posed serious threat to our very social and political foundations. The educational system too has some fundamental challenges in a manner that the products of the system appear not to possess the right attitude to life exemplified by high rate of growth in yahoo business, kidnappings, armed banditry and a host of others among Nigerian youths. Social studies as a subject have as part of its cardinal objective the development of good citizenship, the up-liftment of moral character and promotion of social understanding in the society. This study adopted theoretical approach in analyzing the issues surrounding the missing links in the current social studies curriculum that have made it difficult for the nation to enjoy uninterrupted peace resulting from restiveness and other social vices among the teeming youth population of this great country. The study revealed that social studies curriculum has a gap in the secondary school level. The non-extension of the curriculum to cover students in the senior secondary school paved way for the increasing cases of deviant behaviours experienced in the senior secondary school. The study, therefore, recommended that curriculum experts should do the needful to ensure this obvious gap should be closed in the interest of achieving the educational objectives of this subject and the nation at large. Teachers of this subject especially at the secondary school level should be more equipped to deliver the appropriate content and methods of teaching the subject to drive home the national objectives of the subject.

**Key Words: Values, Morals, Social Studies Teaching, Curriculum**

### **Introduction**

Our society of late has witnessed an unprecedented social challenges resulting mainly from high space of restiveness among the youths. This sort of paradigm shift or maladjustment among our youths has continued to assume different dimensions or proportions. Where and how did we not get it right before now that the society's traditional values of respect for elders, sanctity of human life, fear of god, etc, have all been thrown to the wind. In the place of these desired and preserved societal values, we now have money ritual business, kidnappings, murder, armed banditry and the likes. Where exactly did we miss the track of events that found us where we are today? Is the problem with the barber, the clipper or the head itself. If the problem is with the barber, then our fore bearer have questions to answer which is not the case. Then if the problem is with the clipper, then

the society has some structural defects that are imparting negatively on the younger generation. However, if we narrow down the problem to the "head itself", then one may start thinking of generation defects that have operated over a fairly long time.

In trying to address the concern of this study, the "clipper" aspect of the problem will be examined critically. Here the positions of social studies in the whole scenario will form the focus of this paper. Social studies curriculum as we know have a role to play here as we look into the lofty goals and objectives of social studies. Thus, Social studies is a course that encompasses a wide range of interdisciplinary curricula aimed at equipping the individuals with the knowledge of interaction and performing of an understanding of the social and physical environment in the past and present. Social studies encourage the

development of an understanding of the inter-relationships and effects of beliefs, values and behavioural patterns and the application of this knowledge to new situations. It encourages development of the competencies to acquire, organize, assess and present information for the purpose of problem solving and issue classification. It encourage development of capacity to learn and to acquire certain skills such as those of listening, speaking, reading, writing calculation, observation, analysis and interest which are essential to the forming sound social economic and political judgment (Okpala & Adeyemi, 2006). Social studies programmes instill students with an intimate knowledge of their history, cultural values and civic responsibilities; promote social competency and literacy; introduce students to the values of their own native society; instill in students and understanding and tolerance of the social valued, norms and practices of other cultures and foreign societies (Onyejekwe, 2003).

Jarolimek (2000) stressed that goals and aims of social studies includes self realization by providing experience that fosters maximum growth of individual personalities. The development of human relationship, such as interdependence, cooperation, impact of culture on ways of thinking, behaving and acting. This justifies that social studies instills in individuals the knowledge to perform his civic duties and make him responsible in the society in which he finds himself. Social studies is interested not only in a healthy environment for the survival of present and future generations but also in making the learner responsive to the environment for its well being. Social studies impact knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed in the society for identifying and solving environmental problems and survival on earth.

Similarly, Akinlaye (2002) stressed that the nature and objectives of social studies emphasizes students' familiarity with their physical and social environment; improved social relationship and interactions; skills and ability to think reflectively, critically, creatively and independently, all of which are relevant to problem solving. Social studies as we know have a key role to play in the development of young men and women capable of living intelligently in a world characterized by pervasive and tumultuous change. Most people expect social studies to play a major role in the development of the knowledge and skills necessary for people to become well-adjusted and responsible citizens. The capacity of social studies in bringing the right knowledge and skills to bear upon

these young elements is of critical importance in building a sound society. Social studies is an integrated field of social sciences. It contributes to the development of individual knowledge and skills and the development of a democratic society. It focuses on people's interaction in an environment and targets the active participation of individuals in a democratic process. The concept of development approach recognizes the fact in spite of the enormous growth in social sciences; we have not kept pace conceptually with the drastic changes in the nature of our social order. There exists a gap between what we think about our social, political and philosophic problems and the objective conditions of our society. Here then arises the need for a comprehensive review of the current social studies curriculum as to make it stand the test of time. The current curriculum has no provision for students in senior secondary schools who should be direct beneficiaries of social studies ethnics of behaviour.

### **Social Studies and Cultural Value Education**

Value education refers to all education activities designed to provide basic humanitarian values such as respect, responsibility, justice, honesty, solidarity, tolerance and peace. From early childhood, these values are taught to the young ones in the informal education system. However, educating children to take personal responsibility and become good citizen of a society are both a parental and societal responsibility (Ndu, 2019). The school system ought to teach these democratic values and so the school curricular should also be supportive of the parental teaching of character and moral decision making.

Social studies as a subject has been firmly entrenched in the curricular of Nigerian schools and colleges. The curriculum is designed to serve the interest of the junior secondary level, Colleges of education and the University level. It is also one of the social science subjects taught at the nursery and primary schools in Nigeria. Eze (2019) identified the following as the main objectives of social studies as a subject of societal importance;

1. The development of good citizenship, the up liftment of moral character and the promotion of social understanding in the societies.
2. The promotion of national unity and economic development
3. Preparing students for the world of work and understanding of everyday problems that they may face as adults

4. The development of critical thinking in problem solving and decision making for the survival and progress of the nation.
5. Enhancing socialization and acculturation of citizens in the society.
6. In general, social studies education aspires to achieve humanistic, citizenship and value education.

In other words, social studies education makes efforts to inculcate a level of consciousness in the citizenry at all levels of the society which help them to acquire the virtues of self-regulation, rediscovery of the meaning of duty and accept responsibility, pursue honest endeavours through dedication to hard work. The overall aim of this type of education is the inculcation of the value, habits and orientation which will lead without force to the realization of a great self-reliant society in which justice, democratic change, responsibilities and tolerance shall prevail (Danladi, 2005). Since there is harmonious belief of what social studies stand for all over the world and that is “human in society” its teaching and learning should occupy an important place in the social advancement of any society. Social studies will help us to achieve our goal of building a united, viable and prosperous Nigeria since the subject seeks to achieve national unity and national survival. In social studies, we learn about the cultural aspects of our society and that of other groups in Nigeria. When Nigerian understand and appreciate their differences, develop genuine co-operation and a high sense of commitment to national building, they will be able to promote the unity of the country. In a situation where Nigeria is plagued with social problems and indiscipline among adults and youths, inculcating the correct values will be a better option for the society. Social studies in Nigeria context, was prepared to take care of Nigerian social issues, national values and moral education in the post- independence era, however, the subject is not included in the senior secondary curriculum. Unfortunately enough, secondary school is the level of education where these youths exhibit their juvenile delinquencies, youthful exuberance and venture sameness.

Social studies as a subject aims to direct and give the learners a free hand and opportunities to make enquiries, investigate, discover and acquire experiences in order to make decisions on social issues and become responsible citizens. Part of the reasons for its introduction was to solve national problems

including religious intolerance, indiscipline, cultism, drug abuse, examination malpractices, armed robbery, kidnapping, child trafficking, and child abuse etc. surprisingly these social problems are all staring at our faces individually and collectively. This by implication shows that there is a gap or missing link in our curriculum design in our senior secondary school level-a programme that pushes these youths out of the system to the large society. There is this saying that “you do not give what you do not have”. At this level when the social propeller is pushing the youths in to the society, the social curriculum then failed to match or close the yawning gap in the system’s curriculum thereby allowing these young ones to model the society in any way they understand and wish to operate.

However, the issue that is of concern to all is the readiness of individuals especially our youths in accepting social studies as a veritable tool for personal and national growth and development. There is this problem of poor perception of what social studies is out to accomplish. This is so because the positive values and skills which the subject has as a cardinal objective runs into conflict path with the existing negative social, economic and political environment. Most of our youths still indulge in social vices such as selfishness, greed, get-rich-quick attitudes, kidnappings, armed banditry etc. Social Studies as a discipline has a central role to play in Nigeria particularly where the old worms are fast losing their impacts on the people’s way of life and fast being replaced by internet learned behaviours. The subject has direct impact on the cultural upbringing of the citizenry as it touches all spheres of human endeavour. It is therefore important that curriculum experts should look into the current content of this subject. The scope and content of social studies should be such that should accommodate the changing tide in behavioral patterns of the younger generations that are fast going out of alignment with cultural status quo.

### **Need for the Review of Social Studies Curriculum**

There is widespread acknowledgement of the fact that social studies presently need a comprehensive review of the curriculum. Social studies have been reviewed so many times to meet the needs of the citizens. This review will surely continue in order to meet up with the fast changing world. Social studies have to redesign the school curricular to accommodate global social dynamics and value system that can increase international understanding and co-operation

since man has universal problems such as hunger, hatred, diseases, transportation, communication and many others to contend with. The present deficiency of social studies curriculum at basic level to face the new challenges of globalization must be addressed urgently (Adler, 2010). Supporting this claim (Fadeyi, 2005) opined that there is urgent need for social studies curriculum experts to review the subject curriculum to meet the international standards. Social studies was a core curriculum at the basic component of the education system (Eze, 2018). However, the curriculum review of the Universal Basic Education (UBE), in 2014 introduced revised curricula that removed social studies as a discrete subject areas and made it just a part for the new religion and national values curriculum with other four components parts which are civic education, security education abligion – Christianity and Islam (Fortune, 2018). This review did not go well down in making the subject achieve its core objectives. With this development, social studies became a sub-set of a conglomeration of the new subject. This position was further highlighted by Ogunyemi (2007) who stated that the introduction of the religion and national values curriculum which in essence is to whittle down the presence of social studies at the junior secondary, is bound to have ripple effects on the attainment of the goals of Nigerian education in general.

The merging of five subjects into only one will definitely affect their contents, teaching strategies, resources needed, classroom usage, teaching learning activities and the evaluation procedure of the new curriculum. The subject has lost its content value (Alice, 2018).

A comparison of the junior secondary schools curriculum contents 2008 -2013 and 2014 to date shows a state of imbalance in the themes and topics offered to junior secondary school students. While in 2008 -2013 a total of 26 themes and 69 topics were provided for in the contents of the curriculum, only 13 themes and 27 topics were contained in 2014 curriculum contents of the junior secondary schools in Nigeria. This clearly show that the contents were pruned down to about half of the former contents. Whatever this arrangement was designed by the curriculum planners in this review, the facts on life has point to the fact that the objective of this subject in providing citizens with the right attitude to life has been jeopardized. This review in all practicality reduced the importance of this social studies in the

pursuit of character molding and the target of “catch them young” will be difficult to attain.

Apart from the pruning down of the social studies content in 2014, there is also the contentious issue of not including SS 1 – 3 in the social studies curriculum contents. This obvious omission has robbed the subject the objective of attaining full development of the youths of our nation. This missing link or gap could account for the current security challenges confronting the nation which include terrorism, armed banditry, suicide bombing, kidnapping, corruption, ritual, murder etc.

Social studies curriculum review again requires urgent attention considering the role of this subject in national integration of nation building. Social studies education helps to achieve the goal of building a united viable and prosperous Nigeria, since the subject seeks to achieve national unity and national survival. Social studies stand out as the main subject that can be used to integrate the nation because it places emphasis much on citizenship education. If we, therefore, encourage the teaching of the subject at all levels of our educational system, our children and mostly the youth would be taught the virtues of love, care, respect and sacrifice for one's country. They will also imbibe the culture of peaceful co-existence and respect for the sanity of human life. They will also be taught about our cultural heritage, customs, traditions, courage, kindness, patriotism, self discipline, appreciation, perseverance, open-mindedness, endurance, resourcefulness, obedience, sympathy and industry. These social attributes are important for the upbringing of these young element and our future leaders. The school system should work hard to impact these social values to our youths early enough before they are confronted with the other negative values in our society.

In line with this review and in Nigeria to be specific, there is the need to put in place syllabus for senior secondary schools to cater for SS 1-3. This is long overdue. He queried a situation where we run social studies curriculum or syllabus right from Nursery schools to Primary schools and to junior secondary schools. We also run this subject in Colleges of Education and Universities in Nigeria. Why this missing link at the senior secondary school levels? Bridging this gap will enable our students to be properly equipped with the knowledge of social studies. This will also allow free flow of the subject from Nursery/Primary, Junior Secondary Schools,

Senior Secondary to Colleges of Education and Universities.

Many scholars have criticized the non-inclusion of social studies curriculum for senior secondary school students. These groups of students who are denied of this opportunity of being exposed to social studies are youths in their adolescent ages. This period in their lives needs proper acculturation and counseling to models their behavioural patterns to what the society needs. Unfortunately social studies curriculum created this missing link or gap which must be closed for an effective harnessing of the potential of this vulnerable group.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, the task of building a virile and prosperous nation free of societal challenges cannot be achieved in isolation of strong social institutions like that offered by social studies. A nation that is tending towards growth and development must lay emphasis on reorientation and reorganization of institutions and transformation of the people's welfare. Social studies in all intents and purposes can be used to address the social issues of religion intolerance, suicide bombing, kidnapping raping, cultism, internet fraud, armed robbery and disrespect to elders and constituted authority if the curriculum is properly designed to close the existing gap in senior secondary school level that houses the bulk of these reactionary elements in our society. The reasons behind the introduction of social studies in Nigeria education system should be given more serious attention than is the case presently. These objectives of social studies are contained in the national policy on education show that social studies is an essential subject to be taught at all levels of education including senior secondary schools in Nigeria. The moral education that was imbedded in social studies curriculum needs to be taught in senior classes. Hebert (2013), affirmed that the aim and indeed the total aim of education should be summed up under morality. The concept moral discipline in students this could allow proper upbringing in line with societal value that promote peace and unity in the society. Curriculum of social studies that contained moral education needs to extend to senior secondary school to reduce the moral decadence among our growing youths in Nigeria. The current level of decay in moral behavior among these youths is abysmally high and requires urgent policy adjustments.

### Recommendations

As a way forward, the following recommendations were made;

1. Our curriculum experts without further delay should design measures that will ensure or guarantee the philosophical and historical sustainability of social studies in a way that will return to the spirit and letters of the Nigerian social studies project.
2. The curriculum should be planned in a manner that will close the gap in implementation by capturing the interests of the young elements in the senior secondary schools. In this way, inimical issues that are confronting the nation like terrorism, armed robbery, hostage taking, suicide bombing, pipeline vandalism, Boko Haram and the like could be curtailed in the long-run.
3. Considering the importance of social studies in addressing the social challenges facing Nigeria, teachers of this subject at all levels especially secondary level of education need to be familiar with the contents and methods appropriate for teaching each item in order to interpret the content of social correctly and illicit the right type of attitudes from these students.
4. Social studies as a subject occupies a pivotal position in the social advancement of any nation as it aims to educate students on becoming patriotic and responsible citizens and this is the type of learning experience Nigerian youths of today need. To be exposed to if our future will not continue to be black.

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