

# Common Trends and Divergences in the Evolution and Development of Social Studies in Nigeria and South Africa

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## Abstract

Social studies education is a key subject in the curriculum of school in Nigeria, its introduction into schools in Nigeria dated back to the early 1960s. Like any other school subjects, its acceptance by Nigeria educators and students alike has not been without some understanding, part of which includes the beliefs that, its introduction as a school subject, would eventually displace history and some social science disciplines which have been properly entrenched in the curriculum of schools. The trends and divergences of social studies in Nigeria are curriculum changes; which is the worth of the individual and development of all Nigerian children for each individual's sake and for the development of society in general. The beliefs in providing Nigerian with equal educational opportunity so that they can develop according to their ability and promote the development of an effective and informed Nigerian citizen. The crux of this paper is therefore on the trends and divergences in the evolution and development of social studies in Nigeria and South Africa. Consequently the paper examines the nature of social studies, evolution and development of social studies in Nigeria, the trend and divergences of social studies in Nigeria was also discussed, social studies in South Africa was examined. Other germinate issue were also looked into. Conclusion and recommendations were suggested to buttress the divergences and the development of social studies in both Nigeria and South Africa.

**Keywords:** Common Trends, Evolution, Divergences, Development.

## Introduction

Since the attainment of independent in 1960, schools in Nigeria taught traditional, separate, and un-integrated geography and history at all levels of the educational system. Geography featured specifically the learning of definitions and of landforms, places, names, and economic activities in foreign lands. History characterized by learning the biographies of foreign heroes and heroines. Soon after independence, there were signs of awareness here and there that the social education provided in schools was unsuitable. Examination results were poor. Research conducted among secondary schools students showed that geography and history were among the most unpopular subjects. Although, these revelations did not give rise to direct curriculum change in geography and history, they formed part of the general concern that prepared the way for the now famous national curriculum conference of 1969 held in Lagos.

## The Nature of Social Studies

Defining social studies in a clear and indisputable manner is perhaps an impossible task. The difficulty centres on what precisely distinguishes it from the older fields on the one hand, and the variation in its conception according to time and place. Even in the United States of America from where it was introduced into Nigeria and where it has survived for close to one century, social studies is still said to be in "a state of flux" (Ehman et al, 1974).

Early dimensions to 'social studies' tended to view it as portions of history, geography, civics, and other social sciences that are selected for use in teaching (Preston, 1956) or to quote EB, Wesley, "social sciences simplified for pedagogical purposes" (in Hurtin, 1957). Little wonder that social scientists then saw the "newcomers" as an unwanted and unwarranted addition to school programme, and they did the best they could to frustrate it.

Broadly speaking, however, there are two basic schools of thought on the nature of social studies. The first one subscribes to the pedagogical conception as noted above; the assumption being that such knowledge is useful in its own right and that the simplified materials would prepare children for advanced learning (of social sciences) in the upper classes. But the second school of thought sees the goal of social studies as that of producing effective citizens. Protagonists of this viewpoint contend that the modern, complex and dynamic society requires a comprehensive and balanced education in order to understand and cope with personal and societal problems. This type of education, they argue, could be provided by the integrated social studies (Adedigin 1981).

At this point, it may be relevant to briefly explain the relationship that exists between social sciences and the integrated social studies. Michaelic and Johnston (1965), for instance, have identified three ways by which social sciences form the foundation of social studies. These are:

- 1) The social sciences are primary sources of the content of the social studies; the concepts, principles,

- generalizations, etc.
- 2) The social foundations of curriculum planning in social studies draw data from the social sciences in relation to societal values, problems, changing circumstances, and democratic heritage.
  - 3) The psychological foundations of curriculum planning in social studies draw data from the social sciences regard social processes, learning, child development, and other psychological-methodological aspects of instruction.

In spite of the areas of interface delineated by Michaelis and Johnston however, the relationship between social studies and the social science should be qualified. For it is not totally true that specialists in the two respective fields are working towards the same goal. And to make social science the sole basis of citizenship education is to place values and the valuing process outside the pale of social education, because while the social scientist strives to be 'value-neutral', the social studies educator works towards identifying and promoting positive sentiments and values. Infact, Engle (1970) has successfully drawn the line of separation this way;

*...the social education of citizens called social studies or not, is an applied field-not a scientific one per se. it involves applying information to social problems and using responsible, intellectual process in the resolution of these problems.*

Thus, it can be argued that while social scientists are interested in generating theories and formulating hypotheses, social studies educators are only interested in using the outcomes of their findings to solve practical individual and social problems.

According to the Federal Government of Nigeria (1985), "social studies is not the study of traditional subjects with many overlapping areas." Rather, it is an integrated curriculum for wholesome education. Social studies therefore touches nearly all facets of human existence-ranging from the psycho-social, cultural, to the scientific, technological, political and economic.

Social studies borrows ideas, facets, concepts, principles and generalizations not only from the social sciences, but also from the humanities and physical sciences in order to address the multifarious and multi-dimensional problems of man and society. The process of turning these materials into useable form in facilitated by the philosophy of integration. Wheeler (1967) associates integration with the search for new general organizational categories based on the need to relate various areas of knowledge to each other; with the focus on functions, problems and situations. Quoting Lucan (1981), Adeyemi (1989: 165) illustrates the philosophical and psychological bases for integration in social studies thus:

*A child sees the world as one unit and naturally ask questions which cut across artificial subject divisions. An integrated approach to learning in social studies attempts to following the child's natural ways of learning, viewing the world as a whole, the teacher's role being to provide experiences and to assist the inquiry process by suggesting further lines which might be followed.*

Also commenting on the integrated nature of social studies, Ogusanya (1984) observes that "the various concepts and other material contents of many disciplines used have been fused to become a recognizable and systematically developing body of knowledge.

### **Evolution and Development of Social Studies in Nigeria**

Social studies was first introduced into the Nigerian school system on an experimental basic at the Aiyetoro Comprehensive High School, Ogun State, in 1963 with the Financial and technical assistance of the United State of American Agency for International Development (USAID), the Ford Foundation, and the University of Washington. In August 1973, the Ministry of Education of the defunct western states (now Ogun State, Oyo, Ondo, Osun, Ekiti and Lagos) advised individual schools to adopt the integrated social studies as they become ready for it. the subject was only accepted in principle for the first time at the national level following the inauguration of African social studies programme (ASSP) at the Mombasa Conference of 1968 in which Nigeria participated. Hence, the report of the 1969 national curriculum conference (Adaralegbe 1982) which literally metamorphosed into the MPE stresses the need for social studies as a veritable instrument for forging national unity and promoting citizenship education (Alexander 2001).

Since the 1969 conference, steady progress was made especially by agencies like the Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre (CESAC) and the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC) both now merged with some other agencies as the (MERDL) to evolve the Nigerian social studies programme (NSSP). These agencies enjoyed the ready cooperation and assistance of the social studies association of Nigeria (SOSAN) an association formed in January 1969 by the pioneering teachers of social studies with Profession Babatunde Fafunwa as its first presidents.

Several attempts have, of course, been made according to Belyejusa (1981) to trace the origin, nature and scope of social studies in Nigeria. Also, there are numerous publication on the methods and processes of

social studies education. however, reports by (e.g. Adeyemi 1986, Osunde 1989, Adebayo, 1992, Adeyoyin 1993) indicate that some ambiguities still exist in the essential elements of social studies education then.

Theses are the four objectives of teaching social studies:

- i) To re-visited the twin-issue of nature and scope of social studies in relation to its objective at the secondary school level.
- ii) To identify the levels of organization required with a view to providing guidelines on organizing and planning to teach social studies.
- iii) To highlight resources available to the social studies teacher and methods and strategies for utilizing them.
- iv) To outline techniques and guidelines for certainty the attainment of social studies objectives and goals.

### **Trends and Divergences of Social Studies in Nigeria**

The trends and divergences of social studies in Nigerian according to Adoralege (1988) are as follows:

1. **Curriculum Changes:** The national curriculum council conference organized by the National Education Research Council (NERC) nine years after independence, was unique in that it was the first time in the history of this country that Nigerians by themselves were setting educational objectives for their own children. Three statements of belief about the role of Nigerian education emerged from the conference. These were;
  - (a) The belief in the worth of the individual and development of all Nigerian children for each individual's sake and for the development of society in general.
  - (b) The beliefs in providing Nigerian with equal educational opportunity so that they can develop according to their ability and
  - (c) The belief in a functional type of education that will facilitate democracy as a way of life, and promote the development of an effective, informed Nigerian citizenry.
2. **Teacher Training:** The efforts to change the nature and content of social education in Nigeria came from outside. Even before the 1969 national curriculum conference, the ford foundation had plans to introduce social studies into the Nigeria school curriculum development in social studies at the Aiyetoro Comprehensive High School in Western Nigeria. About the same time, the foundation working through the University of Wisconsin, in collaboration with the then Northern Nigerian government, launched a programme in Northern Nigeria to improve primary school teacher preparation. This project covered five subject areas, including social studies. While the two projects produced useful materials for the promotion of social studies, social studies did not make an in road into the Nigerian educational system until the early 1970s. With Federal Government encouragement and efforts by the institute of education and the Department of Education of Ahmadu Bello University, social studies has replaced traditional geography and history in all primary schools in the country. Most post primary institutions now teach social studies in the first two years. Ahmadu Bello University offers degree and diploma courses in social studies education.
3. **Differing beliefs about social studies:** The tremendous progress reported above has been made over a short period of time. Social studies as a formal school subjects in Nigeria is about 50 years old.

One could identify four main groups of people whose views are important to the development of social studies these are: (1) people with training in social studies, (2) tutors in post-primary institutions, (3) primary school teachers, and (4) top officials of the state ministries of education.

Among the few people in Nigeria with formal training in social studies education, social studies is considered an applied field of study that employs the key concepts of the social sciences to help children improve through investigation in their understanding of the world in which they live.

- Post-primary institutions in Nigeria include secondary schools, Grade II Teacher College then technical colleges, most of them either hold first degree or national certificate in education (NCE).

### **Social Studies in South Africa and other Nations**

Social studies are called different names in different parts of the world. For example, some call it cultural studies, oriental studies, environmental education/studies, citizenship education or social science. This is due to the various ways people perceive the concept, which is as a result of varied objectives from place depending on the needs, aspirations and desires of a people. For the same reasons, social studies varies in objectives from time to time and from place to place depending on the needs, aspirations and desires of a people. (Bertrand 2004).

In nearly every nation, social studies is seen as one of the principal vehicles for preparing youth to accept roles as "responsible adult citizens" "what a responsible adult citizen" means varies from nation to nation but the intention is similar. Social studies is been referred to in South Africa as Citizenship Education. as South Africa reaches the end of its first decade of democracy, there is much reflection of the progress made over the past ten years (Adeyoyin 1990).

This is therefore an opportune time to reflect on what democracy and citizenship mean for the people of South Africa. During the national election in April, the need to extend the voter registration deadline as well as the fact that a huge proportion of eligible person had not registered to vote, suggested that the vigorous public participation of the resistance era has begun to wane.

Furthermore, according to Alexander (2001) given the burgeoning tide of crime and violence, the future stability of our country depends on being able to cultivate citizens who can demonstrate socially and morally responsible behaviour. In addition, this country also requires citizens who are involved in their communities and have the knowledge, skills and values that enable them to participate effectively in public life (Kerr 2002). This begs the question: so how do we develop these good citizens? An important strategy would be to target young people, who are less likely to carry the baggage of having grown up in apartheid South Africa. Here it is useful to consider the case of England, where citizenship education has been introduced into schools as an antidote to decreasing levels of participation in public life by young people (Kerr 2000). Early in this decade, citizenship education in school became statutory for learners between the age of 11 and 16 years. The aim of citizenship education programmes is to help children develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge to equip them for participation in public life (Alexander 2011).

It is therefore contended that the introduction of citizenship education programmes in schools would be an important nation-building initiative in South Africa. The introduction of citizenship education is seeking to promote democracy in South Africa by developing a citizenship intervention programme for schools, as well as a tertiary education programme on citizenship, human rights and democracy. In developing these citizenship education and consulted. Although, historically, interventions targeting children have typically not taken their views into consideration, the participation of children in matters affecting them has been accorded increasing attention. Much of this focus on child participation has been prompted by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), which states in Article 12 that “states parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the rights to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child; consequently, recent years have increased consultation with children on issues pertaining to their well-being.

In South Africa, the Human Rights Commission (2000) conducted a series of consultative workshops with children between the ages of 9 and 13 years in all provinces on children’s perceptions of their rights and how they understand the role of the Human Rights Commission.

### **Additional Rights and Responsibilities in South Africa**

The perceptions of children’s rights in the school context according to Koleger (1991) focused on the classroom setting and the interaction between teachers and learners. Examples of rights identified were the right to be taught by the teacher to be disciplined. Fairly, and to a clean and safe classroom environment. The discussions did not include any issues pertaining to the wider school setting, for example, children rights regarding the curriculum context and methods of instruction or children involvement in school governance. The rights mentioned by the participants are commonly expressed in the life orientation and history school curricular and these subject areas are probably the sources from which learners derived their knowledge about rights. Rights at home and in the community were not different from the generally expressed rights, even though children saw their rights as limited in relation to those of adults (UNGA, 1989).

The following rights were of paramount importance in the South Africa context. Food, housing, medical care, recreation, safety and protection, care and nurturing, respects and help with home work. The reality for South African children is that although the constitution grants them the right to education their access to schooling can be denied by factors; such as lack of transport to school and parents inability to pay school fees or purchase school uniforms.

### **Conclusion**

The awareness of rights displayed by even the youngest children in South Africa is seen as a direct reflection on the socio-political context and the fact that there is a heightened awareness of human rights largely because the majority of the population were denied those basic rights under the apartheid regime.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the foregoing discussion, the following recommendations are therefore suggested for proper development of social studies in Nigerian and South African.

- (1) Social studies curriculum in Nigeria and South Africa should be strictly followed and implemented so as to inculcate love, peace, unity and harmony among the citizens for proper development of African countries.
- (2) Educational institutions in Nigeria and South Africa in which social studies is taught as a subject, have major role to play with regard to improving the contents and instruction delivery in their very important

subject areas for the promotion of peace, security, unity and development as well as inclusion of violence resolution strategies into the social studies curriculum of the schools.

- (3) Concepts culture, racism, fundamental human right, acceptability of one another views and opinions should be well taught in schools.

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