

Re-Thinking Social Studies Education for Effective Citizenship in Twenty-First Century Nigeria

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Abstract

The premised the inability of school Social Studies to attain its set objectives on the lopsided emphasis on the Cognitive rather than on the Affective domain of learning. Accordingly, paper called for a re-thinking and re-positioning of the subject in terms of its objectives, content and methodology. It also advocated for a regular exposure of Social Studies teachers to professional development programmes. Finally, the paper recommended the development of test instruments for the measuring of the Affective domain of learning.

Introduction

The re-engineering of the Nigerian educational system, following the 1969 National curriculum conference was expected to reposition Nigeria in its rightful place among the committee of nations. This position was seen to be in line with Fafunwa's (2003) view of education as "the aggregate of all processes by means of which a person develops ability, aptitude and other forms of behavior of positive value in the society in which he lives." The conference resulted in a series of seminars and workshops which led to the publication of the '1977' National policy on education which until then was lacking. The 1977 National policy on education in pursuance of this task, observed that education in Nigeria is an 'instrument per excellence' for effecting national development and accordingly, should continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is an important instrument for change and any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society must be preceded by an educational revolution. Accordingly, the (2004) revised National policy on Education identified the national objectives of a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; and a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (NPE, 2004p.6)

It is pertinent to note that the policy went a step further to identify in specific terms the objectives education was expected to achieve in Nigeria and they include the following:

- the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- the inculcation of the right type of values and attitude for the survival of the individuals and the Nigerian society
- the training of the mind in the understanding of the world ; and
- the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society.

In line with this vision of the government, the school curriculum was restructured and a number of subjects were introduced into the Nigerian educational system. The restructuring led to the introduction of Social Studies education into the Nigerian educational system.

Social Studies education was considered an innovative and versatile subject that will lead to the attainment of the aims and objectives enunciated in the national policy on education (Akinlaye,1996). Advancing reasons for these, Akinlaye (1996,p.15) posited that Social Studies was a subject that was geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national unity and national consciousness among others. This is in line with Peters (1972) view of education as being the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it.

Accordingly, the subject was viewed as capable enough to address and modify the dysfunctionalities of the inherited educational system. The Nigerian Educational Research Council now Nigerian Educational Research and development council (NERDC) defined the subject as a way of life of man, it focuses on how man influences the environment and is in turn influenced by the environment.

However, after nearly four decades of the introduction of this subject it cannot be said that the Nigerian social, economic, and political life has had any remarkable improvement. For instance, Nigeria has featured prominently at the top in the ranking of the world most corrupt nations in the world. The nation has actually been silver and a bronze medalist in recent years (2003 and 2004) respectively. The Nigerian culture is fast changing. It is also quite obvious that while some of these changes are on the positive side, a greater

percentage of it is on the reverse side and regrettably with respect to the cherished values of the nation. Also obviously discernable is the direction of these changes which with very little exception, is westernization. The changes in the society culturally speaking have been traced mainly to colonial experience, education, and the unrestricted exposure to western mass media. Over time, the cumulative effects of these factors reflect in virtually every aspect of Nigerian lifestyle and have been blamed for the numerous social ills of the society. For instance, the poor dress habits of the youths, religious intolerance and riots, ethnic intolerance and disturbances, sectarian violence youth restiveness, cultism, political thugeries, kidnapping, homosexuality, lesbianism, same sex marriage and excessive materialism (resulting in greed, avarice, embezzlements of public fund, violent and other social criminalities). Nduka (2004) observed

that many of the Nigerian bureaucratic elites operate without rigid and widespread adherence to the principle of efficiency, accountability, merit and with reference to the primacy of service to the majority of the populace.

That education is the key to addressing these social ills of the Nigerian society is no longer a matter of debate as Nduka (2004p.33) observed that although the Nigerian value disorientation is pervasive and has in fact reached a crisis proportion, it is the firm belief of the Nigerian Academy of Education that the best hope of rescuing the ethical shipwreck and enabling the Nigeria developmental ship of state to sail smoothly and confidently on the high seas is revamped education. The question is can education be an instrument per excellence in this onerous task? Again Nduka (2004) suggestions are that the first task is to identify a set of trans- cultural, trans-religious and trans-ethnic basic values to which the mass of the Nigerian society must subscribe. These basic values should include but not limited to the following: ***honesty, truthfulness, justice and fair play, discipline, courage, tolerance, humanness, courtesy, right attitude to work, national consciousness, service to the nation, patriotism, respect for elders and constituted authority, and service to God and humanity.*** To this end education will be seen as an agent of values clarification, orientation and transmission.

It is pertinent at this juncture to recall that the social studies education though may not claim monopoly over these basic values, but to a large extent addresses them in its content. As Jimoh (2003) observed that Social Studies is the most equipped subject in the school curriculum that has the capability to inculcate moral and social values. A critical analysis of the objectives of the subject revealed that knowledge taught in social studies is considered essential for worthwhile living in the society, since much of the content of this knowledge is drawn from the realities of the learners' own environment (Adejuwon, 1991). The development of thinking and decision making skills, critical thinking and the ability to analyze and solve problem are stressed in social studies. In addition, there are attitudes and values which are considered desirable and which a good citizen should possess. These are: co-operation, comradeship, togetherness honesty, integrity, hard- work and fairness. Furthermore, according to Olayiwola (2000) Social Studies in our schools must

- *Inculcate national consciousness and aspiration towards national cohesion, unity and progress;*
- *Make learners become good citizens capable of and willing to contribute to the development of the society;*
- *Inculcate the right type of attitudes, skills and values in the learners;*
- *Make learner acquire basic knowledge, feelings and skills as essential pre-requisite to personal development as well as to a positive contribution to the better quality of life of man in the society; and*
- *Develop in the learners, intellectual capacity and ability, self confidence, self-expression, self-realization, initiative, thinking, resourcefulness for the socio-political order.*

These objectives, were identified by NRRC (1971) in its guidelines on primary school curriculum report of the national workshop on primary education held between April 26th to May 8th 1971 (p.262-263) The report states among others that Social Studies will develop in the students, positive attitudes of togetherness, comradeship and co-operation towards a healthy nation; the inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness and justice at work and play as one's contribution to the development of the national goals. The content of Social Studies is structured to reflect these aims and objectives of the subject.

However, the present happenings in Nigeria portray that these objectives are not being realized but what is however the issue today with regards to Nigeria search for an effective Social Studies education is how do the nation reposition the subject to reflect the present national challenges?

The study of Ibhafidon (2011) shows that the in spite of the fact that Social Studies as a subject has been in the school curriculum for the past four decades, the conduct of Nigerians consequently, the issues is that something significant is wrong with either Social Studies curriculum itself or with its implementation .Literature search revealed that something fundamental is wrong with the objectives of social studies at the classroom level. (Jimoh, 2004) revealed that 64.1% of the junior secondary school Social Studies objectives were cognitive while just 25.37% of the objectives were affective. The study further revealed that the content of the subject was 57.45% while the affective just 15.96% and psychomotor was even 26.6%. This ratio failed to reflect the objectives and content at the curriculum level with affective domain having the lion's-share.

Further more, many empirical studies have shown that at the implementation stage, the method of teaching the subject significantly deviates from the modern teaching strategies of child-centred of inquiry discussion, discovery, problem-solving, story-telling, etc.

Strategies for Repositioning Social Studies for Effective Citizenship

The findings of Jimoh (2004) that the cognitive domain has 64.18% of the objectives of social studies at the junior school level should be reversed. Social Studies concerned with the inculcation of attitudes, skills and values pre-disposes to emphasis the affective domain. Ibhafidon (2011) asserts that students' academic attainment in the subject was high. This high attainment stems from this greater emphasis on the cognitive aspect of the subject. This being the case, concerted effort should be put in place to begin to emphasize the affective domain in stating social studies objectives at the classroom level. This study recommends that a ratio of 5:3:2 in favour of effective domain should be enthroned in stating behavioral objectives at the school level. This, we hope will guarantee a reversal of citizens conduct.

Closely related to the above is the point that literature search has revealed that much is not available by way of measuring instruments in the area of affective domain. Efforts should be put in place by curriculum experts in developing test instruments for the affective domain. It is argued that the dearth of these test instruments accounts for the relative emphasis on the cognitive aspect of the subject.

The findings of Okon (1999) and Ibhafidon (2011) that for Social Studies teachers at both primary and secondary levels were using lecture method to teach has been traced to the subject's inability to articulate the goals in the affective domain and learners inability to internalized the learned attitudes and values. Social studies teachers must begin to realize that it is a taboo to use lecture method in the teaching of a subject. This is because this method has been found to promote superficial learning. If the subject must promote positive attitudes and values in our citizenry the subject should be taught using methods of teaching that enable the learners to conceptualize, analyze and synthesizes issues. Teaching method that encapsulates learning experiences which stimulate students' interest and perceptions should be used more. These steps will go a long way in helping learners to internalize concepts and principles of the subject and by extension help in restoring our values out the same time change our orientation. Finally, the inculcation of social norms, teaching of co-operation and team-spirit, good habits, character, morals and sound attitudes will be guaranteed.

Over the years, social studies content was relatively remains static. Except for some specific emergent issues such as sex education, drug abuse, environmental education, and some few other areas, the subject has not really been made to reflect modern social environment. It is our firm conviction that the content of the subject deserves a major surgical operation in order to reposition it so as to address the issues facing the Nigerian nation. Presently, Nigerian society is bedeviled by a number of problems. These problems include lack of patriotic zeal, unity, greed avarices, embezzlement of public fund, religious, cultural prostitution, intolerance, youth restiveness among other. These problems have been identified to be the bane of Nigerian's quest for growth and development (Ibhafidon, 2012). In order to successfully overcome these evils, the social studies curriculum must be revisited and revamped. The starting point is to review its content and align it to equip and reposition the citizens to such a point that they will be effective players in the restructuring and transformation of the Nigerian nation.

Social studies teachers need to undergo regular on a basis professional development programmes. The programme envisaged here involves seminars, workshops and conferences. In addition, social studies teachers should also be encouraged to present research papers. This will assist in identifying the various curricular problems at the classroom level.

Social studies is one of the subjects in the social curriculum that is expected to inculcate cultural values to the learners. However, it has been found that this aspect of the subject is given less attention by teachers at the classroom level. At a recent international conference in South Africa, a Nigerian presented a very brilliant paper titled Cultural Education a Strategy for National Development. The comment that was made by the participants after the brilliant presentation was that his paper advocating the wearing of local outfit was at variance with his three-piece English suite. That paper it was observed would have made a more effective impact if the presenter has worn a native African dress. The point being made here is that teachers should teach Cultural Education with all the emphasis and not by precept but by practicing what they teach. After all, there is an adage that says that "the Act of playing a part is to think yourself into it" Teachers should ensure that the content and learning experiences for Cultural Education are stimulating and interesting and are presented with conviction. Culture is defined loosely as the way of life of the people. Culture involves both materials and non-material aspect of life. Nigerians need a cultural revolution. As it is today Nigerian cultural heritage has given way to a varieties of foreign cultures that are erroneously mistaken for Nigerian culture.

Social Studies has the onerous task of teaching culture. Through culture societal values, attitudes and norms are transmitted from one generation to the other. Teacher must begin to see increase social crimes as having relationship with acceptance of western culture.

Ibhafidon (2012) noted that with increase exposure to western culture, Nigerians have abandoned her cultural heritage. This trend he claimed is mostly responsible for the increased crime rate in the country. Nigerian must return back to its cultural heritage and Social Studies as one of the carrier subject must be restricted to address cultural education with all seriousness.

The society we live is dynamic and Nigerian society is not an exemption. Development is good and should be encouraged by all. However, one should not loose sight of the facts that these developments generates issues and these issues often than not may be negative. Social Studies is in a position to address these issues and should accommodate these issues. For instance, the issues of gender balance, sex education, examination malpractice, youth restiveness quota system, ethnic and religious conflict and a host of other issues should engage the attention of our young learners early enough. Through, early exposure, learners will come to appreciate the evils they constitute to peaceful co-existence and national development.

Conclusion

This paper has taken the position that social studies as a subject as it is in both content and methodology is structurally defective and as such cannot achieve the set goals. For it to do this, the subject should made to under go a surgical operation by way of curriculum review. The review envisaged will be in line with repositioning it to meet the modern day challenge of the Nigerian state and the Nigerian child.

Consequently we have argued that social studies as a subject need a teaching method that is drastically different from the lecture method. B its nature, the subject lends itself more to methods that are child-centred. We also are of the opinion that the content of the subject should be reviewed to include current challenges due to the dynamic nature of the Nigerian state. Furthermore teacher were encouraged to give more emphasis 67 subjects objective in to the affective dormain.

Finally some issues facing the Nigerian nation were identified for inclusion into the content of the subject.

We are convinced that with the above-named strategies taken, social studies would have been reposition to equip the learners for effective citizenship. Citizens who have the right type attitude and values for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian nation among others.

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