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**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ADEQUACY OF GEOGRAPHY  
RELATED CONCEPTS CONTAINED IN THE SOCIAL  
STUDIES CURRICULUM**

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**Abstract**

*This study was carried out to determine if Nigerian students in Junior Secondary Schools have a good understanding of the Geography related concepts contained in the Social Studies curriculum. A good understanding of Geography related concepts by JSS students may likely pave the way for them to opt for Geography when they get into senior secondary school. Thereby increasing the number of students who offer the subject at external examinations and in tertiary institutions. A survey research design was used, and the study sought to elicit the opinion of teachers (Geography and Social Studies) as well as the students with regard to the objectives, content, and adequacy of the present Social Studies curriculum in Junior secondary schools in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. The instruments used to collect data were the Teachers' Questionnaire and students' Achievement Test in Social Studies. The use of the split-half method determined the reliability of the instrument. For the questionnaire, it was 0.81, and for the achievement test, it was 0.86. Statistical tools used to analyse the data included frequency counts,*

*percentages, mean, standard deviation, and chi-square. The findings, among other things, show that Social Studies as an integrated subject consists of enough Geography related concepts or elements for junior secondary school students. Based on the findings, recommendations were made for implementation and further studies.*

**Keywords:** Adequacy, Geography related concepts, Social Studies curriculum.

## **Introduction**

Geography as a school subject in Nigeria has undergone various revolutionary changes in the last few decades. At nearly every level in the educational system, the subject is characterized by rapid growth and change in philosophy, structure, content, and methodology. Despite these notable changes, however, the subject remains a sub-system of the Social Studies Curriculum in the Nigeria junior secondary school. The teaching and learning of Geography involve a wide range of activities from the classroom to the field, and quite a number of activities and skills will be needed to make it effective and successful. As opined by Boden (1976), changes in the nature of Geography and the way it is taught have been parallel by changes in Geography's place in the total school curriculum.

Geography is both a physical and human/social science. On the one hand, it studies the many features of the earth's surface, and on the other hand, it exploits the interaction between cultural, political, economic, and social processes with the physical features of the earth, while clearly in the realm of science, the kinds of studies pursued are significantly physical rather than social. As far back as August 1970, the High School Geography Committee organized a conference on High School Geography in Benin City, Nigeria. The conference was aimed at illustrating to teachers how concepts and models in Geography could be introduced early enough at the Secondary School Level. There were discussions on the topics to be taught in the first two years of High School. Some of the participants suggested that there was no need to teach Geography separately as a school subject but that it should be inculcated in the Social Studies

curriculum. According to them, Social Studies was more interesting to young students than Geography alone.

The term Social Studies is American in origin, and its teaching and learning started towards the dying decades of the 20th century. From the United States and Britain, Social Studies spread to Africa, where it was adopted as a subject to make education more relevant to the needs of the society (Olaleye, 1992). Social Studies was introduced into Nigeria, like other countries in response to societal needs and aspirations (Olaleye, (1992). And to use education for national integration as an attempt to heal the wounds of the civil war (Dubey & Barth, 1980). It was also introduced as part of the general trend of curriculum innovation in Nigeria. The current Social Studies curriculum, in its introduction, clearly states that “apart from taking into consideration societal needs within the education system at the Junior Secondary Education, has incorporated many of the contemporary issues of local and global concern,” among which are environmental issues, globalization, and climate change. Also, one of the overall objectives of Social Studies at the Junior Secondary level is to enable students to develop the ability to adapt to their changing physical environment, which is indeed a geographical concept.

Social Studies was first taught as a school subject in Nigeria in 1958 when it was introduced as part of the British curriculum. The first attempt at including it in the Nigeria school curriculum was by Aiyetoro Comprehensive High School in Ogun State (Ndububa, 1995). From the very beginning, good citizenship was the purpose of Social Studies, and it involved those studies whose subject matter relates directly to the organization and development of human society and to man as a member of social groups. Perhaps it is based on the relationship that exists between Social Studies and parent subjects like Geography, Economics, History, Government, etc. that the National Policy on Education introduced Social Studies at Junior Secondary Schools as a prerequisite for pursuing the named humanities subjects in Senior Secondary School because it provides students with general knowledge of these subjects and serves as a foundation for Senior Secondary level.

Though Social Studies is currently examined in external examinations in Junior secondary school under the subject of National value education, it is still recognized and taught by experts in the field. By making Social Studies a part of the core curriculum for primary, secondary, and teacher education levels, together with other related subjects, it is believed that some of the general, political, economic, and social problems of the country could be solved as well as the desired unity of the country achieved in earnest.

As long as Geography is wrapped up with other subjects such as Social Studies, civic education, and security education, up to the point of losing its identity at the Junior Secondary school, it will continue to suffer some setbacks in developing along the proper lines and may not appeal to students at the senior secondary school. Hence the need to ensure that not only do geography related concepts be well defined, but they must also be understood.

According to Okunrotifa (1977), a student's perception of any subject is influenced by his previous experience, i.e., by the kinds of concepts he has acquired in times past and by the sorts of theories he may hold. Thus, the Social Studies curriculum has a great role to play in the choice of senior secondary school Geography. This could be in terms of the number of students that opt for the subject, the degree of success in both subjects, and the extent of the relationship (correlation) between the performance of the two subjects at JSS and SSS levels for the same set of students. If, therefore, Social Studies and Geography have different educational goals to achieve, why then should Geography give way to Social Studies in junior secondary school?

The Social Studies curriculum from JSS I to JSS III contains the following topics which are related to Geography in the SSS and can be considered basic geographical concepts:

**JSS One:** Meaning of environment; types of environment, e.g., physical and social environment; features of the physical and social environment; resources in the environment; the influence of physical environment on human activities; the influence of human being on the physical environment; types of environmental problems; cause of environmental problems; effects of environ-

mental problems on the society and Solution to the environmental problems.

**JSS Two:** Meaning of resources; examples of resources – human, natural, raw materials, equipment, money; uses of raw materials; the meaning of transportation; olden days means of transportation; modern means of transportation; advantages of modern means of transportation; problems of modern means of transportation; solutions to problems of transportation; sources of water – rainfall, river, well, water boreholes and streams etc. and keeping sources of water clean.

**JSS Three:** Meaning of population; basic unit of population – family, community; factors in securing population growth; population control; types of transportation – road, water and air; advantages of each of the systems of transportation; impact of science and technology on world transportation systems.

All the above topics are taught in the Social Studies curriculum, which is now embedded in the subject area referred to as National Value Education. The National Value Education (NVE) is made up of three subjects, namely, Social Studies, Civic education, and Security education, which are all taught separately and individually in Junior secondary school, but the examination is taken as National value education.

The current Geography curriculum is said to reflect the depth, appropriateness, and interrelatedness of the curricula content and also covers many issues of Social Studies content, such as value orientation, peace and dialogue, family life, and entrepreneurial skills. The major focus of the new Geography curriculum, however, is the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS). Some of the Geography related themes/topics which cut across Social Studies in the Nigeria secondary school system include:

**SS I:** Environment and its resources; the environment; weather; climate I; regional Geography of Nigeria; population of Nigeria; resources of Nigeria; economic and human Geography;

transportation. In SS II, we have: Environment and its resources; environmental resources; renewable and non-renewable resources; environmental problems; environmental conservation; regional Geography of Nigeria; transport and communication in Nigeria; economic and human Geography; Population.

The importance of Geography in the general education of Nigerian students cannot be over-emphasized as it is an all-encompassing subject that deals with man and his environment with his relationship. An educated grasp of Geographic issues is therefore essential in mastering the dynamics of the environment, which is considered the home of man. A lack of basic Geographical knowledge in Social Studies at the junior secondary school level will greatly affect the entry behaviour of students into SS1 Geography. The concern here is the adequacy of Geography related content in the present Social Studies curriculum and how well students understand and master them and then relate with them in their everyday lives, especially as regards national development.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to examine the Social Studies curriculum to determine the adequacy and students' understanding of Geography related concepts contained therein. The study also sought to:

- i. assess the adequacy of Geography related concepts in Social Studies as it relates to students' enrolment in Senior Secondary school Geography.
- ii. determine the predictive nature of students' performance in JSS Social Studies as an indicator of good mastery of Geography related concepts in it.
- iii. assess the Social Studies curriculum and the implications it has on Geography at the Senior Secondary school level as a result of the ability of students to understand and master the related concepts contained therein.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the problem stated, the following research questions have

been provided answers to:

- i. How adequate are the Geography related concepts in Social Studies as it relates to students' enrolment in Senior Secondary school Geography?
- ii. How is a student's performance in JSS Social Studies an indicator of good mastery of Geography related concepts?
- iii. What implications does the Social Studies curriculum have on the learning of Geography at the senior secondary school level as a result of the ability of students to understand and master basic concepts contained therein?

### **Methods**

A survey research design was adopted for this study because the research sought to determine the level of students' understanding of Geography related concepts contained in the Social Studies curriculum through the collection of information from a representative sample of students and their teachers. The result of the survey will also be generalized to the population under investigation.

The study was carried out in Lagos State, Nigeria, where there are twenty recognized Local Government Areas and 37 local council development areas (LCDAs). The local governments are divided into six Local Education Districts (LEDs) under the five administrative divisions, namely Ikorodu, Epe, Badagry, Lagos Island, and Ikeja. This study was carried out in Mainland Local Government Area, which is under education District IV at Sabo-Yaba.

The target population was made up of all the first-year senior secondary school students (SSS1) in public schools in the Mainland Local Government Area of the State (19 schools in all, with 12 Senior secondary schools). A random selection of five out of the nineteen schools comprised the sample for the study. Thirty SS1 students from each of the five schools formed a total sample size of 150 SS1 students. The sample also included ten randomly selected Social Studies teachers and ten randomly selected Geography teachers. This implies that two Geography and two Social Studies teachers were randomly selected from each of the five schools.

Two research instruments were used to collect data and to provide answers to the research questions and hypotheses formulated. The first was a teacher-made students achievement test in Social Studies (SATSS), and the second was a teachers' questionnaire (TQ). The student's achievement test in Social Studies was prepared by the researcher to reflect the content of the syllabus, most especially the Geography related concepts contained in it, which the students were expected to have known. The test was a 50-item multiple choice objective test.

The second instrument was also prepared by the researcher for both the Social Studies and Geography teachers. The teachers' questionnaire was made up of two sections, A and B. Section A sought the bio-data information of the respondent teachers, while section B was designed to elicit information about the teacher's opinion about Social Studies curriculum, its element of Geography content, factors limiting undiluted Geography education for Senior Secondary classes, and whether there is any need for curriculum renewal or review in Secondary Social Studies and Geography.

The data generated with the testing instrument and the questionnaire were analysed with the use of frequency counts, percentages, mean ( $\bar{O}$ ), standard deviation, and T-test statistical tools. T-test was used to determine the significance of the difference between the performance of students at JSS1 and SS1 levels of education and to determine the difference in the opinion of the teachers. Analysis of variance was also used to determine the significance of the difference between the performances of students in the selected schools.

## **Results**

**Research Question 1:** How adequate are the Geography related concepts in Social Studies as it relates to students' enrolment in Senior Secondary school Geography?



**Table 1: Adequacy of Geography Concepts**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
1	Geography related concepts in Social Studies prepares students for learning Geography at senior secondary school	2.57	0.31
2	Geography related concepts in Social Studies are regularly used due to societal dynamism	2.52	0.25
3	Teachers from other subject areas also use the concepts to facilitate their students' performance	3.12	0.52
4	It brings an urgent upsurge in the awareness level of Geography among the secondary school students	2.78	0.31
5	Geography related concepts in Social Studies helps to organize and formulate principles according to acquired geographical concepts,	2.91	0.02
	<b>Average Mean</b>	2.78	

**Research Question 2:** How does a student's performance in JSS Social Studies serve as an indicator of good mastery of Geography related concepts?

**Table 2: Performance and Mastery**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
1	Geography related concepts in the syllabus have been provided, and set of indicators to be tested	2.50	0.44
2	Teachers develop grid (table specification) tests that contain subject matter that tested levels of cognitive or behavioral aspects to be measured	2.49	0.45
3	The assessment instruments are in accordance with core competencies, basic competencies, and indicators of competence that were previously set	2.78	0.42
4	the teacher explains the assessment criteria for each attitude that will be assessed, include the form of the instruments to be used	2.62	0.51
5	Checking and processing the results of the assessment with reference to the scoring guidelines and assessment criteria previously set	2.51	1.01
	<b>Average Mean</b>	2.58	

**Research Question 3:** What implications does the Social Studies curriculum have on the learning of Geography at the senior secondary school level because of the ability of students to understand and master basic concepts contained therein?

**Table 3: Learning and Understanding**

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD
1	The ability to explain the various patterns of regularity in astronomy, geography, social and economic.	2.31	0.31
2	Observing in a planned and systematic environment	2.73	0.33
3	Reading and ability to utilize and create geographic data (statistical data, graphs, charts, and figures)	2.53	0.25
4	Evaluating the human activity in the natural environment	2.61	0.43
5	make calculations (distance, elevation difference, average temperature, amplitude, temperature reduction when an increase in height, the time difference)	2.56	0.10
	<b>Average Mean</b>	2.56	

### Discussions

The result shows that there was a significant positive correlation between the Social Studies curriculum in JSS and the Geography curriculum in SSS. Hence, the Geography related concept in the Social Studies curriculum is quite adequate. This is in line with the submissions of Oluniyi and Ojebiyi (2013) that the integrated approach that social studies adopts would present a subject like Geography in a wholistic manner, thereby making it appealing to intending students. Hence both studies show a positive correlation between Social Studies and Geography.

The result further shows that students' performance in Geography is not significantly determined by understanding of Geography related concepts in Social Studies. In a study by Dhakal (2022), it was established that geographic content is important though difficult to teach as compared to the other social science related content in the Social Studies curriculum. The main objectives of the social

studies curriculum of the geographical content are to enable students to observe and explain the immediate geographical features and practice drawing maps. He also gathered from the study that the majority of the teacher viewed geography content as very applicable, though much more difficult than other integrated social science subjects.

The result equally shows that there is no significant difference in the extent to which the mastery of Geography content in JSS Social Studies will affect performance in Geography at the SSS level. The findings from this study also revealed that students of Social Studies in JSS classes are being taught enough geographical concepts to enable them to put in for Geography in their senior classes. In a similar study by Dhakal (2022), it was discovered that topics in geographical units are very broad, and because the geographical content is divided into physical, human, regional and practical, it is usually too much to teach in the average classroom.

### **Conclusion**

In the opinion of both Geography and Social Studies teachers in Mainland local government areas, the Social Studies curriculum in use today, as recommended by the Federal Government of Nigeria, is comprehensive enough for JSS students and thus contains adequate Geography related concepts to guide the students in their choice of Geography as one of their subjects in the SSS. It was also gathered that JSS Social Studies students are well taught the basic Geography related concepts, and this knowledge is sufficient to help them opt for Geography in senior secondary school. The Social Studies textbooks recommended by the government are also in line with the curriculum, and most junior secondary school students have an average understanding of Geography related concepts therein. The study shows that Social Studies as a school subject has been fully entrenched in the Nigeria school curriculum, despite the fact that it was introduced not too long ago (1963), to the extent that it is now enjoying a status not enjoyed by some older subjects like Geography (1948) and History.

## Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that the government, through its agencies, should ensure strict adherence to timing to ensure effective coverage of the syllabus. It is also important for regulatory agencies to ensure that students are taught in the sequential, step-by-step method as outlined in the syllabus instead of lecturing them. Just as Social Studies is made compulsory for all JSS students, Geography should also be a compulsory subject at the SSS level.

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