
**RETHINKING SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM
CONTENT SELECTION AND ORGANISATION:
A FOCUS ON IMPLEMENTERS**

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Abstract

This paper emphasizes the importance of curriculum content implementers in Social Studies education. It stresses the need for more responsibilities to be placed on certain groups of people such as teachers, School administrators, Government, Agencies, and Evaluating bodies when it comes to delivering the curriculum content. A review of available literature on areas relating to Social Studies, its curriculum content, and a check on the current realities of Social Studies education showed that the curriculum content is sufficient to solve everyday issues in our immediate environment on paper but is not reflecting in reality because of the lapses of the curriculum implementers. There is a need for the government, teachers, content evaluating agencies, and everyone involved to make education its priority to make the educational system more relevant and functional.

Keywords: Social Studies, Content selection, Curriculum implementers.

Introduction

According to the National Policy on Education, the philosophy of education in Nigeria is centered on a person's growth into a good citizen and their complete integration into society (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2014). Education is focused on self-realization, improved human relationships, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, and national unity in addition to social-cultural, economic, political, scientific, and technological growth in order to attain these goals (Etuk, 2004). Only by achieving short-term behavioral goals can the nation's education policy, which the government utilizes to reach these long-term aims and goals of education, be successful. The cumulative effect of these goals results in the behavior patterns that numerous topics, including Social Studies, aim to attain. These short-term behavioral and particular objectives, as well as the long-term educational aims and goals, can only be attained through the curriculum that the school provides students with and the way that curriculum is structured and presented. The main subject of this article will be Social Studies and the material included in its curriculum.

The core of the curriculum is curricular content, which reflects the society's knowledge culture (Etuk, 2004). Activities for implementing the curriculum often focus on the content. This indicates that curricular content refers to the knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and values that the school instills in its students based on a particular subject. As a result, the information, skills, attitudes, and values that aim to accomplish the purposes and goals of Social Studies are represented by the curriculum content for Social Studies. This article examines the definition of Social Studies, its goals, the selection of the curriculum's content, organizational guidelines, as well as reconsidering the curriculum's content with an emphasis on those who teach the subject.

Social Studies: Its Meaning and Objectives

The philosophical underpinnings of Social Studies stem from the realization that knowledge must be value-based, holistic, broad,

applied, usable, and analytical in order to recognize the interconnectedness, interdependence, and interrelatedness of human knowledge. This realization is what gave rise to Social Studies and has kept it alive (Nworji, 2017). There are theoretical issues with the precise definition of Social Studies. Therefore, there is no watertight or straightjacket definition of Social Studies. However, academics have made an effort to develop the following definitions:

According to Bulya and Nongo (2010), Social Studies are a synthesis of a variety of academic fields, such as history, political science, geography, anthropology, psychology, and economics. In order to create successful and future citizens of Nigeria, teachers and other subject stakeholders must be aware that Social Studies is a problem-approach discipline through which man studies and learns about issues of survival in his surroundings. The inter-disciplinary nature of Social Studies is well-captured in this description, which suggests that the “themes,” “issues,” “problems,” “concerns,” and aspirations that typically fall under the scrutinizing spotlight of Social Studies must also be inter-disciplinary in nature.

These definitions center on the role of man in the universe, his comprehension of his varied environments, and his knowledge, skills, attitude, and values. It is intended to support the person who is aware of and ready to fulfill his or her social function. These definitions explain why Social Studies education has come to be recognized as a suitable medium for the dissemination of the knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and values that make up the subject’s curriculum. According to Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2006), the overall goals of Social Studies at the primary and junior secondary level of education are to develop a person’s capacity to adapt to his or her changing environment, to become a responsible and disciplined person able and willing to contribute to the development of their societies, to instill the proper types of values, to develop a sense of comprehension toward other people, and their sense of solidarity and sharing based on confidence in one’s own identity is another goal, as is learning how to understand the various facets of being human in various cultural and social circumstances.

Understanding the purpose and goals of Social Studies education leads to the development of top-notch content at all levels of Social Studies instruction. This is demonstrated by the fact that the aforementioned Social Studies objectives have already been set in motion for fulfillment in accordance with the NCCE's (2002) minimum standard courses for the Pre-NCE and NCE programs (Kazi, 2017).

Social Studies Curriculum for Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Institutions: Content Selection and Organization

Famous teachers and philosophers who went through the colonial educational system – educational material created by our colonial masters – included Kwame Nkrumah, Tafawa Balewa, Julius K. Nyerere, Zomo Kenyata, Leopold Senghor, and a host of others – saw its drawbacks as opposed to the post-colonial educational system. They set out to create new educational regulations that would represent Africa, specifically Nigeria (Shamija, 2008; OwanEnoh, 2019). Therefore, the first characteristic of Social Studies is that its subject matter is a Nigerian idea or creation, whose knowledge is comprehensive and problem-solving in nature. Additionally, Social Studies provides people with the analytical skills and knowledge they need to make wise decisions and behave in a morally upright manner through value creation and social action (Kazi, 2017).

In order to include students directly and actively in the learning process through appropriate and relevant learning activities, the curriculum content must therefore highlight impacts. Shamija, (2011) emphasizes that learning experiences and content should come from a person's endless interactions with others, including those that occur inside and outside of his immediate environment, as well as those that occur with social groups, institutions, and organizations, as well as those that occur with all man-made (technological) components in his environments. The learning experiences and curriculum content, according to Zaria and Bulya (2011), must be structured to be flexible in order to accommodate the society's demands for knowledge and experiences regarding other national issues, such as the population and family life, education,

drug abuse, environmental education, the fight against indiscipline, education, and others. To put it another way, the curriculum need to be set up to reflect man as he impacts and is influenced by his changing settings. This choice of an integrative strategy will, as a result, improve Social Studies instruction and learning for future generations of Nigerian school children.

One of the undesirable conditions seen in the educational system is that the instructor is typically given a syllabus or a scheme of work that has already been created; he or she is never involved in the process of choosing and organizing the content. Because understanding the subject matter and the type of information he must teach is essential to how he conducts himself in the classroom, teachers rarely take the time to study and assess it in order to try to comprehend the underlying principles of such content. Secondly, the teacher will be able to articulate his precise objectives to reflect the objectives of our educational system and develop engaging activities for the students that could lead to effective learning if he has a thorough understanding of the nature of the material he would be teaching. The criteria proposed by Shamija (2011) and Utulu and Shaibu (2011) to direct the teacher in choosing content for the subject include lesson objectives, validity of the content, significance of the content, learner's interest, learner's ability, and utility of the content, are in opposition to this trend.

The most crucial step after choosing the material to teach based on the aforementioned criteria is organizing the material. The student and his physical and social circumstances become the teacher's emphasis because Social Studies is all about the realities of existence. In order to establish what the learner should know and what competencies he should acquire in order to perform more successfully, a careful investigation of these contexts is required. According to Okwori's (2004) writing, people and the institutions they represent differ depending on the physical surroundings. This effectively means that we can't expect to have Social Studies curriculum that is appropriate for all students in all settings. This explains why the "Societal Theme" is frequently used in Social Studies to organize knowledge, concepts, skills, values, and attitudes to impart students (Shamija, 2011). For instance, sociological themes

in Nigeria could include ethnicity, justice, unity, religious tolerance, communication, crime, environmental sanitation, political and social awareness, early marriage of girls and others.

Due to their societal relationships, they might not be ongoing challenges and issues in nations like the United States of America. So (Shamija, 2011; Utulu, 2011; & Kazi, 2017) propose that curriculum material arrangement should be Thematic, Conceptual, Generalization, and Spiral in order to provide Social Studies to students in a comprehensive manner. This means that the organization of curriculum content should center around themes common to students; generalized ideas about classes of objects, events and ideas; be able to create links between ideas and concepts; arranged so that what is learned in one level is built upon in the next level. The successful creation, evaluation, development and implementation of Social Studies curriculum content cannot be an actuality without the deliberate effort of certain groups of stakeholders known as implementers.

Revising the Curriculum for Social Studies: A Focus on Implementers

A close examination of the variety of subjects covered by the primary, secondary, and tertiary school curricula for Social Studies education in Nigeria leads one to believe that the content in terms of Societal themes for problem solving is sufficient to meet the objectives of Social Studies education at these levels. The addition of new subjects to the existing curricula could contribute to the current issue of curriculum overload. However, in order for the younger generations to utilize what they have learned and seen in other locations to reflect the new world, Nigerian society, its institutions, and organizations must be immediately examined and reoriented. Due to the discrepancy between what is offered as curriculum content and what is attainable in society, the problems that this subject is designed to answer on a daily basis for our society continue to arise. This gives the impression that the educational system and schools are not resolving the issues for which they were designed.

When it comes to producing high-quality Social Studies content

for the Nigerian educational system, there are several people, organizations, and institutional bodies that need to reconsider their strategies. These consist of: The teacher: Curriculum implementer is another term for teachers. A teacher is someone who must have received professional training and whose duties include planning educational activities, facilitating the learning process, and effectively managing both human and material resources for the benefit of the student. To this end, a teacher should consider the following three fundamental questions: What do I teach is the subject matter covered in the curriculum, teaching module, or syllabus. How do I teach is the approach, technique, strategy, or procedure to be used. How successfully was the lesson taught is how well the lesson was assessed (Ada, 2010). In summary, a successful teacher should be one who uses the curriculum to accomplish the desired goals.

When qualified teachers who are knowledgeable about the subject matter are employed, the goals of Social Studies are achieved. The National Policy on Education's statement about teachers makes this clear: "to develop highly motivated, conscientious, creative, and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system; to assist teachers in integrating into community life and society at large and to enable their commitment to National objective; to provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background appropriate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to an ever-changing environment (NPE, 2014).

On paper, the aforementioned policy on teacher education is excellent, but in practice it is very difficult to implement due to issues with instructor locations, pay, access to ongoing training, and other issues (Akubuilu, Ugo, Ugo, Ugochukwu & Ikehi, 2019). According to (Otu, Essien, Obot & Akpan, 2010), a greater proportion of Social Studies teachers have low entry qualifications, come from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds, and have low moral standards. Another finding regarding the professors who teach this subject is that most of them entered the field as a last resort; therefore they are not as dedicated as they ought to be (Akinbote, 2007). If Social Studies content is not properly implemented by the foremost curriculum implementers- teachers- and learners' interest motivated, the intended goal of Social Studies

could not be achieved.

School Administrators: These are the people in charge of managing the school's three Ms: man, material, and money. They are either sent to represent the government or are there on their own. According to Esu (2004), creating quality curricular material without careful administrative considerations may be a useless endeavor. When school administrators: acknowledge that teaching and learning are the school's top priorities; clearly communicate the school's vision to students, teachers, parents, and the community; provide clear goals and monitor progress on said goals; spend time in classrooms observing teaching and working with teachers on improving their teaching; nurture and sustain a climate of trust; and also lack tolerance for poor and ineffective teaching are said to be effective school administrators (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Firestone & Reihl, 2005) in (Williamson, 2011). It is safe to deduce that school administrators play a significant role when it comes to curriculum content development and implementation and whenever there is a lapse in handling their responsibilities, every aspect of the implementation of said curriculum suffers a major setback.

Government: Every level of government, whether federal, state, or local, has a stake in making sure the Social Studies curriculum content is adequately established. This is due to the fact that a stable and democratic society cannot exist without the general acceptance and understanding of the majority of the Social Studies curriculum. Government involvement in personnel development, which is a major concern in every modern economy, can help to improve curricular content and its application. By adhering to a predetermined curriculum that will train students to serve the community, they can also afford to adequately support the process of preparing people for employment. In order to support educational research, the provision of adequate instructional materials, infrastructural facilities, educational facilities, equipment, and the development of our educational institutions, particularly at the tertiary level, it is crucial for the government to finance the education sector.

When you consider the state of education in Nigeria today, it is clear that our government hasn't done much of anything about all of these deficiencies. Consider the budgetary allocation for education in 2022, which was the smallest in the previous seven years and represented 5.39% of the total budget (*Vanguard*, August 2022). The value of education to a thriving society appears to be waning, which will undoubtedly have an impact on funding for our schools, research, and teacher preparation. Quality assurance results from government involvement in the training and development of personnel who are in charge of creating and implementing elite curricula.

Agencies of Curriculum Content Development

Implementing curricular content calls for a team effort involving the knowledge, experience, skills, and talents of numerous organizations, people, and the government. National Universities Commission (NUC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), National Teachers Institute (NTI), Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), Curriculum Organization of Nigeria (CON), West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO), Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), and other stakeholders like Social Studies are just a few examples of the organizations that participate in the matriculation process.

Evaluating Bodies: The process of evaluating a school program involves identifying its development, skills, accomplishments, and failures. Evaluation was described as “a process of determining the decision of areas of concern, selecting appropriate information, collecting and analyzing information in order to report summary statistics usable by decision makers in picking among alternatives” by Utulu and Zaria in 2006. Goals are established as an indicator of general objectives and desired outcomes of the Social Studies course, serving as a broad guide to planning, producing, and evaluating curriculum and instruction employing teachers and other recognized bodies in order to fulfill the aforementioned description. Further

stating that Social Studies aim statements include the following:

Conceptual process, abilities, and affective outcomes must all be assessed against a predetermined standard in order to determine whether the stated outcomes were achieved. They contend that whereas inappropriate standards cause us to create negative self-concepts that affect our attitudes and values, proper standards enable us to change or mold our attitudes and relationships with others. If evaluation is taken as seriously as this, it is now clear why Nigeria is in the sorry position it is in today due to the low standards that have been set in our homes, schools, communities, and society (government). For instance, one must have credit level pass in Mathematics and English and any other relevant subject at Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) before reading History, Physics, Biology to mention but a few. What if you must have a certificate before you are employed to work in Nigeria no matter the cadre?

Suggestions

The following suggestions were made for rethinking Social Studies content for a “New World” based on examination of rethinking Social Studies contents (knowledge, attitude, values, and skills) and its application in modern society: To start, the organizations in charge of this should hire teachers who are qualified, certified, and possess the right personal qualities to foster an environment that is supportive of both teachers and students. Second, the government must prioritize the education of its people since no country can advance without a strong educational foundation. The government should ensure that agencies in charge of checking and supervising various departments of schools are doing so with the utmost sense of conscientiousness, bearing the learners in mind at all times. They should also get more active in the welfare and manpower development of the educational sector. The right stakeholders should look into and address the insecurity problems that have plagued us to the bare minimum.

Additionally, organizations responsible for upholding standards should make sure that the amount, quality, and quantity of labor

required is sufficient to serve the admitted student population. They ought to promote group projects in our classrooms. Allow for exchange programs inside our educational system. Whatever goes wrong with the resources – people, money, and materials—that administrators are entrusted with managing, they should be held accountable. All levels of government should enforce the requirement to disclose assets prior to running for office. Our evaluation results shouldn't merely be theoretical but also useful. A student on Teaching Practice should be assessed based on proper observation of his/her pedagogical competence.

Conclusion

The implementation and evaluation methodologies should be examined given that human society is constantly evolving and that Social Studies has established knowledge, attitude, values, and skills as its content. To make the educational system more functional and relevant, it is imperative that everyone involved – the government, educators, content assessment organizations, and others – make education their top priority. In order to adapt to the new world, it is crucial to create a favorable learning and practice environment.

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