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**DEVELOPING THE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES  
OF PROSPECTIVE SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS  
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIAN  
TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULA**

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***Abstract***

*This paper focuses on the vital need to improve Social Studies education by producing outstanding teachers who can have a significant impact on society. It draws attention to the complexity of the teaching profession and emphasises the need for specialised knowledge, a wide range of motivating viewpoints, a sustained interest, and a strong sense of efficacy. This study examines how aspiring Social Studies teachers might develop their professional competencies within the unique framework of Nigerian teacher education. It explores the state of teacher education in Nigeria today, highlighting the unique requirements and duties of Social Studies educators and offering workable solutions to strengthen their professional proficiency. Even though Social Studies is required in Nigerian elementary and junior secondary education, it has trouble forming students' moral character and teaching fundamental principles. This paper's central claim is that instructors play a critical role in promoting meaningful transformation. It makes the claim that the effectiveness of Social Studies is mostly dependent on the*

*quality of its instructors, who have the transforming ability to mould the next generation. In addition to supporting the integration of motivational perspectives with the learning of professional information, this study promotes a holistic approach to teacher training. With the ultimate goal of raising educational standards and promoting societal development, this research aims to significantly advance Nigerian teacher education in the process.*

**Keywords:** Motivational orientation, Professional competence, Social Studies, Teacher Education.

### **Introduction**

The efficiency of teacher preparation programmes and the design of these programmes' operations have come under increased scrutiny in recent years. Education is widely acknowledged as a tool for national development and has a profound impact on society. This has forced many nations, including Nigeria, to work hard to achieve high-quality education. Such education is driven by instructors, and high-quality instruction necessitates high-quality teachers. The Federal Republic of Nigeria's National Policy acknowledges the critical role that excellent teachers play in delivering high-quality education at all levels and states that teacher education will remain a top priority in the planning and development of education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). According to the policy, the goal of teacher preparation programmes is to provide responsible, driven teachers at all levels of education. It aims to foster creativity and inquiry, integrate educators with the community and society, provide them a solid intellectual basis for flexibility, and strengthen their dedication to the teaching profession.

In order to fulfil the objectives of teacher education, it is necessary to have an efficient teacher training programme that will produce professionally qualified educators with the necessary background knowledge to carry out their duties and enhance student learning. The teaching of Social Studies in Nigeria's

elementary and junior secondary school curricula is mandated by the National Policy on Education. According to the policy, Social Studies is a key topic whose goal is to instill in students the necessary fundamental knowledge, morals, and attitudes to get by in society. Since the teacher is the primary factor influencing students' learning outcomes, the effectiveness of the discipline's instruction and the achievement of these goals relies on the calibre of Social Studies teachers. A Social Studies teacher must be well-versed in the subject, understand how to apply instructional strategies and classroom management techniques so that every student will gain something from the experience, and have the proper attitude, values, and abilities to achieve learning objectives. Thus, the challenge of Social Studies teacher education is to help aspiring educators acquire important professional competencies.

The professional preparation and development of teachers that aims to help them acquire the attitudes, abilities, and pertinent competences deemed necessary to carry out the task of teaching effectively and efficiently in light of the needs of the society they serve is referred to as teacher education or training. Various teacher training institutions in Nigeria provide training to aspiring educators as well as experienced educators who wish to obtain further certification or qualification. Although the programme has been largely successful, certain challenges still exist that negatively impact the Nigerian educational system. To guarantee that teacher quality satisfies the requirements and demands of the educational system, a strong teacher education programme is necessary. As a result, it is important to make sure that the teacher preparation programme for aspiring Social Studies educators is in line with both societal and modern educational standards. Developing in educators the attitudes, abilities, and competences required for good teaching is the main objective of teacher education. It is crucial to implement a strong teacher preparation plan that not only tackles current issues but also continuously adjusts to the changing educational environment. Nigeria may raise the calibre of its teachers and

hence improve its educational system as a whole by giving priority to the development and coordination of its teacher education programmes. In light of this, this study examined how aspiring Social Studies teachers might enhance their professional competencies and how this can affect teacher education programmes in Nigeria.

### **Critical Elements of Effective Social Studies Teacher Preparation**

A country's total educational quality is greatly influenced by the educational background of its teachers. This is due to the fact that an educational system's qualitative aspects are mostly determined by the calibre and commitment of its teachers. The fate of the educational system ultimately lies with the teachers, even in cases where the government makes sufficient contributions to education and educational planners create excellent regulations. They alone are accountable for ensuring that any educational system's aims and objectives are met. As a result, teachers are essential in helping students be sufficiently prepared for the future so they can achieve the goals of the country.

Teachers' experience and degree of knowledge play a major role on how well pupils learn, according to Huang and Moon (2009). Effective teachers need to possess certain knowledge and relevant professional skills in order to provide engaging and long-lasting learning experiences. Darling-Hammond (2000) asserts that a country's efforts to raise its pupils' academic performance ought to begin with the calibre of teacher preparation and certification. Effective teaching strategies, in-depth subject knowledge, adaptability in instruction to suit various learning styles, and assessment of students' learning outcomes in the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains are just a few of the many skills that make an exceptional Social Studies teacher. Additional requirements include a strong sense of self-efficacy and passion for the subject and field.

The main goal of teacher education programmes should be to provide aspiring educators with the tools they need to promote

successful learning. Given the diversity of classrooms, teachers need to be skilled in adjusting their lessons to meet the needs of each individual student. While acknowledging advancements in Nigeria's teacher training programmes, Durosaro (2006) contends that more work has to be done to keep up with the demands of modern education. This is due to the fact that training institutions' output of high-quality teachers has an indisputable impact on how well an educational system performs. The capacity to improve students' academic performance, foster the development of pertinent skills, and work well with coworkers and administrators is considered a sign of a competent teacher. As a result, the main goal of teacher education should be to provide educators with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed to carry out their jobs well.

### **Defining Professional Competences for Social Studies Educators**

The Social Studies teacher must have the necessary credentials and professional competence in order to carry out the role of instilling values in students and efficiently transmitting knowledge. Regrettably, opinions differ regarding the precise competencies required for a Social Studies educator to do well in their role. A precise and detailed definition of these qualifications is neither desirable nor achievable due to the complexity of the Social Studies teacher's job. Conversely, the development of a Social Studies teacher training programme and the definition of standards for their hiring, assessment, and self-evaluation necessitate a provisional list of these credentials. To effectively address the demands of the profession that deals with teaching and training, instructors must possess a variety of abilities and skills. According to Baumert and Kunter (2006), who created a professional competence model for teachers, these aptitudes and competencies are related to "teachers' professional competence." Their concept of professional competence goes beyond using knowledge as the primary criterion for determining the effectiveness of instruction. Teachers' professional expertise,

motivational orientations, capacity for self-regulation, and their values, beliefs, and objectives are all taken into consideration. While self-regulation skills are part of the teacher professional competency paradigm, they are not the same as motivational orientations. According to Kunter (2013), self-regulation skills have a wider application and are linked to a more expansive work environment, while motivational orientations are more closely tied with a classroom context (i.e., teaching a certain subject matter).

The term “professional knowledge” refers to the competencies and pertinent knowledge that are necessary for an educator to perform their job, and the main goal of teacher preparation programmes is to establish a solid and long-lasting foundation in professional teacher knowledge. There are essentially three domains or components of professional knowledge. According to Schulman (1986), these are “content knowledge (CK), the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and the pedagogical knowledge (PK).” A teacher needs to be knowledgeable with both PCK and CK in order to enhance student learning and classroom instruction. CK stands for the teacher’s possession of a sufficient understanding of the subject matter that they are accountable for instructing. It requires a deep comprehension of the ideas and information related to this particular issue, as well as how it is organised. While studies have demonstrated that teachers’ CK is a critical factor in determining effective instruction (Ball, Lubienski, & Mewborn, 2001; Grossman, Scheonfeld, & Lee, 2005; Mezieobi, Fubara, & Mezieobi, 2008), they have also demonstrated that content knowledge alone is insufficient to improve teaching and learning outcomes (Ball, Lubienski, & Mewborn, 2001; Grossman, Scheonfeld, & Lee, 2005; Abell, 2007). The PCK, which combines content and pedagogy, is the next professional knowledge component deemed essential for the effective teaching of the topic. In contrast to content knowledge (CK) and procedural content knowledge (PCK), pedagogical knowledge (PK) has a broader scope. According to Shulman (1986), PCK refers to a

unique comprehension that only a skilled teacher will possess and PK refers to “the teacher’s knowledge of the broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organisation.” This is dependent on how teachers integrate pedagogy and content knowledge to make learning more meaningful and within the grasp of the students.

A Social Studies teacher needs to possess both strong professional knowledge and a pertinent motivational orientation in order to provide high-quality instruction in the classroom (Kunter, 2013, Shulman, 1986). It is impossible to overestimate the significance of motivational orientations in psychological functioning since they pinpoint the source of a person’s drive to finish a task. These motivational orientations stem from two sources: either internal (intrinsic motivation) driven by interests, values, pleasure, etc., or external (extrinsic motivation) driven by things like financial reward. According to research, motivational orientations are related to the “psychological dynamics of behaviour, the maintenance of intentions, and the monitoring and regulation of occupational behaviour” (Baumert & Kunter 2006). These orientations are thought to influence a variety of teaching and learning outcomes, including curiosity, persistence, willingness to learn, adopting new ideas, risk-taking, and performance.

Self-efficacy and curiosity are the two motivational orientations that are given particular focus in this research. Kunter, Frenzel, Baumert, Nagy, and Pekrun (2011) define interest as the affective dimension of instructors’ motivational orientations, while self-efficacy relates to the cognitive dimension. Self-efficacy perception is the individual’s judgement of and confidence in their own ability to handle the situations they face and to organise and carry out the actions required to complete a given task (Bandura, 1994). Since it embodies the cognitive domain of educators’ motivational orientations, the underlying process is cognitive.

Interest is a significant component that influences teachers’ personal dedication to their work of influencing students’ knowledge as well as their sense of fulfilment in it. Interest is a

domain of motivational orientation that describes the satisfaction and desire for a certain object (Social Studies, in this case) or collection of things (problem-solving across multiple domains) (Hidi, Renninger, & Krapp, 2004). As the teacher's level of interest in the teaching process always affects learners' interest as well as the dedication to ensuring students' effective learning outcomes, interest is a significant factor that determines the success of teaching and learning. Furthermore, it has been discovered that a teacher's interest has a favourable impact on students' attitudes, beliefs, values, and overt behaviour (Baumert, Kunter, Blum, Voss, Jordan & Tsai 2010).

Teachers' perceptions of their own efficacy matter in all areas and disciplines, and they have a special bearing on how well Social Studies is taught and how well students understand the subject. The discipline is a course of study that is rich in values and has the potential to alter students' character. As such, teachers must possess the requisite skills to impart lessons in a way that makes sense to students and causes them to undergo essential and long-lasting transformation. A teacher's interest and sense of self-efficacy will ultimately affect how they carry out their professional role (teaching outcome). In order to teach Social Studies effectively and have a positive impact on students' lives, a Social Studies teacher must consequently have a high sense of self-efficacy and interest in the subject. Only when teachers exhibit positive self-efficacy and a genuine passion in the subject matter can they hope to influence students to develop similar traits. Teachers of Social Studies must be motivated and have a high sense of self-efficacy in order to improve student learning and instruction.

Teachers' total professional competence will be improved and their enthusiasm and interest in their work will be cultivated if they possess sufficient professional knowledge (CK & PCK) and a relevant motivational orientation. As a result, this will enhance the learning outcomes and accomplishments of the kids. Consequently, society will profit from a more educated population and all of its related advantages. An educated society has several



benefits, including higher standards in academia and other fields, economic growth, and social and political stability for the country and its people. Teaching is a tough job that requires a mix of suitable motivational orientation, persistent attention, and a positive sense of efficacy on the side of the teacher, in addition to substantial knowledge (CK & PCK). It is imperative that teachers have a strong sense of efficacy in their abilities to teach and a sincere interest in their subject matter and teaching in general in order to acquire efficiency and effectiveness in all parts of teaching and to meet educational goals.

Quality teaching is the main goal of many educational systems around the world, regardless of their developmental stage. The competency of instructors and their motivational attitude to enhance learning outcomes and teaching quality should be given more weight in order to achieve this goal. Salifu and Agbenyega (2013) contend that as teacher motivation directly affects both the calibre of instruction and the learning results of students, it is imperative to give it more consideration. In order to effectively prepare pre-service teachers for the issues they will encounter, teacher education programmes must prioritise the development of both professional knowledge and motivational attitudes. Teachers' sense of efficacy is strongly correlated with their professional expertise, students' academic performance, their methods of instruction, and their psychological health, which includes their dedication to and job happiness (Zed, 2016). Teachers must therefore demonstrate strong self-efficacy in their teaching abilities as well as a sincere interest in their subject matter and teaching in general for instruction to be efficient and effective. On the other hand, professional knowledge is typically given precedence over motivational orientation in Nigerian teacher education. As such, it is critical to make certain that aspiring educators have the necessary motivational orientations in addition to professional expertise. In order to produce capable and driven teachers who can have a good influence on students' interest and achievement, teacher education programmes and professional development should emphasise both of these elements.

### **Challenges and Imperatives in Integrating Professional Competence among Prospective Social Studies Teachers**

To effectively impart knowledge and develop values in students, a Social Studies teacher needs to possess the required certifications and professional competence. Unfortunately, there is disagreement over the exact skills needed for a Social Studies teacher to be successful in their position. Because teaching Social Studies is such a complex job, it is neither desired nor attainable to define these qualifications precisely and in depth. On the other hand, a temporary list of these qualifications is required for the creation of a Social Studies teacher training programme and the establishment of criteria for their employment, evaluation, and self-assessment. Teachers need to be multi-talented and multi-skilled in order to meet the demands of the teaching and training profession. Baumert and Kunter (2006) developed a professional competence model for educators, and they state that these competences and aptitudes are associated with “teachers’ professional competence.” Their definition of professional competence extends beyond making knowledge the main factor in judging how well a lesson was delivered. Considerations include the professional experience, motivational orientations, self-regulation skills, values, and goals of teachers. Although they are included in the teacher professional competency paradigm, motivational orientations and self-regulation abilities are not the same. Kunter (2013) asserts that motivational orientations are more strongly associated with a classroom setting, but self-regulation abilities are more broadly applicable and connected to a more expansive work environment (i.e., teaching a given subject area).

“Professional knowledge” is defined as the skills and relevant knowledge required of educators to carry out their duties; building a strong and durable foundation in professional teacher knowledge is the primary objective of teacher preparation programmes. The professional knowledge domain can be divided into three primary components. These are “content knowledge (CK), the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and the

pedagogical knowledge (PK),” according to Schulman (1986). To improve classroom instruction and student learning, a teacher must be informed with both PCK and CK. CK is an acronym representing the teacher’s level of comprehension of the subject area they are responsible for teaching. It necessitates a thorough understanding of the concepts and data surrounding this specific issue, as well as an understanding of how it is structured.

Although research has shown that teachers’ content knowledge (content knowledge) is not enough to improve teaching and learning outcomes, it has also shown that teachers’ CK is an important factor in determining effective instruction (Ball, Lubienski, & Mewborn, 2001; Grossman, Scheonfeld, & Lee, 2005; Mezieobi, Fubara, & Mezieobi, 2008). The second professional knowledge component considered necessary for the topic’s efficient teaching is the PCK, which blends pedagogy and content. Pedagogical knowledge (PK) is more comprehensive than procedural content knowledge (PCK) and content knowledge (CK). PCK stands for a special understanding that only an experienced teacher can have, while PK stands for “the teacher’s knowledge of the broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organisation,” according to Shulman (1986). This depends on how educators combine pedagogy and subject-matter expertise to increase learning relevance and student accessibility.

To deliver high-quality instruction in the classroom, a Social Studies teacher must have both a strong foundation in their field and a relevant motivational orientation (Kunter, 2013, Shulman, 1986). The importance of motivational orientations in psychological functioning cannot be overstated, since they identify the motive behind an individual’s desire to complete a task. These motivational orientations originate from two sources: external (extrinsic motivation) driven by things like money reward or internal (intrinsic motivation) motivated by interests, values, pleasure, etc. Motivational orientations have been found to be associated with the “monitoring and regulation of occupational behaviour, the maintenance of intentions, and the psychological dynamics of behaviour” (Baumert & Kunter 2006). It is believed

that these orientations have an impact on a range of teaching and learning outcomes, such as performance, risk-taking, curiosity, perseverance, and readiness to learn.

In this study, two motivational orientations – self-efficacy and curiosity – are specifically highlighted. Interest is the emotive dimension of instructors' motivational orientations, according to Kunter, Frenzel, Baumert, Nagy, and Pekrun (2011), whereas self-efficacy is related to the cognitive dimension. A person's assessment of and confidence in their own capacity to manage the circumstances they encounter as well as to plan and execute the steps necessary to finish a task is known as their self-efficacy perception (Bandura, 1994). The fundamental process is cognitive since it represents the cognitive domain of educators' motivational orientations.

Teachers' personal dedication to their profession of influencing pupils' knowledge and their sense of fulfilment in it is significantly influenced by their interest. According to Hidi, Renninger, and Krapp (2004), interest is an area of motivational orientation that characterises the fulfilment and desire for a certain thing (in this case, social sciences) or collection of things (problem-solving across various domains). Interest is a key component that defines the success of teaching and learning since the teacher's level of interest in the process always influences learners' interest as well as the commitment to guaranteeing students' successful learning outcomes. Moreover, research has shown that students' attitudes, beliefs, values, and overt behaviour are positively impacted by a teacher's involvement (Baumert, Kunter, Blum, Voss, Jordan & Tsai 2010).

In many fields and disciplines, teachers' opinions of their own effectiveness are important, and they particularly affect the quality of Social Studies instruction and students' comprehension of the material. The discipline is a study programme that is morally rich and has the power to change students' personalities. Because of this, educators need to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and abilities to teach in a way that students can understand and that leads to significant and permanent change in

them. In the end, a teacher's level of interest and self-efficacy will determine how well they perform their job (teaching outcome). A Social Studies teacher needs to be very self-sufficient and passionate about the subject in order to teach Social Studies effectively and make a positive difference in the lives of their pupils. Teachers may only hope to encourage students to develop such attributes when they demonstrate a real enthusiasm for the subject matter and a positive self-efficacy. To enhance student learning and instruction, Social Studies teachers need to be highly self-sufficient and driven.

If teachers have the necessary professional knowledge (CK & PCK) and a pertinent motivational orientation, their overall professional competence will increase and their passion and interest in their work will be fostered. This will thereby improve the children's learning results and achievements. As a result, society will benefit from a population with higher levels of education and all of the associated benefits. Higher standards in academia and other fields, economic progress, and social and political stability for the nation and its citizens are only a few advantages of an educated society. Teaching is a challenging profession that calls for a combination of extensive knowledge, a positive sense of effectiveness on the part of the teacher, and a proper motivational orientation (CK & PCK). To become efficient and effective in all aspects of teaching and to fulfil educational goals, instructors must have a strong sense of efficacy in their ability to teach as well as a genuine enthusiasm in their subject matter and teaching in general.

Regardless of their developmental stage, the primary objective of many educational systems worldwide is to provide high-quality instruction. To do this, greater consideration should be given to the qualifications of teachers and their drive to improve student learning outcomes and teaching effectiveness. Salifu and Agbenyega (2013) argue that since teacher motivation directly impacts students' learning outcomes and the quality of instruction, it is critical to give it more thought. To ensure that pre-service teachers are adequately prepared for the challenges they

will face, professional knowledge and motivational attitudes must be given top priority in teacher education curricula. According to Zed (2016), there is a substantial correlation between teachers' sense of effectiveness and their professional knowledge, students' academic success, their instructional strategies, and their psychological well-being, which includes their commitment to and enjoyment at work. For instruction to be efficient and effective, teachers must consequently have a strong sense of self-efficacy in their ability to teach as well as a genuine passion in both their subject matter and teaching in general. However, in Nigerian teacher education, motivational orientation is usually subordinated to professional knowledge. As a result, in addition to having the appropriate professional experience, it is crucial to ensure that aspiring educators possess the required motivational orientations. Teacher education programmes and professional development should place a strong emphasis on each of these components in order to generate competent and motivated teachers who can positively impact students' interest and achievement.

### **Conclusion**

The success of Nigeria's educational system is contingent upon the development of professional competence within the curricula of teacher education programmes. When methodically put into practise, the aforementioned recommendations have the potential to improve the quality of education in Nigeria by equipping aspiring teachers with the skills they need to succeed in their positions, encouraging a culture of continuous improvement within teacher education institutions, and more. Through adoption of these measures and promotion of cooperation among all parties involved, Nigeria can set off on a revolutionary path to generate highly skilled teachers who will mould the country's future via high-quality education.

### **The Way Forward**

The development of potential Social Studies teachers' professional competence requires the cooperation of a number of stakeholders, including academic institutions, legislators, teacher educators, and the prospective teachers themselves. Updated curricula that emphasise the growth of aspiring teachers' material and pedagogical topic knowledge as well as pertinent motivating orientations like their interest and self-efficacy must be collaboratively developed and implemented. Additionally, it's important to support pedagogical innovation, technology integration, cultural responsiveness, and experiential learning. Establishing state-of-the-art training facilities with state-of-the-art technology, encouraging a lifelong learning mindset in aspiring teachers, and providing teacher educators with ongoing training are all crucial tactics to increase competency in future educators. In order to guarantee that only individuals who are academically strong and interested in teaching are accepted into the various teacher education courses, there is also a request for the reform of the admission requirements. The entire plan for boosting professional competence in Nigerian teacher education is completed by advocacy for the importance of education in society and feedback systems with working teachers.

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