

**EXPLORING AND NAVIGATING ON ETHICAL AND  
OTHER MORAL DILEMMAS TOWARDS EFFECTIVE  
CITIZENSHIP IN SOCIAL STUDIES: THE QUEST  
BEYOND THE PRESENT REALITIES IN NIGERIA**

*(Being a Lead Paper at the 2024 SOSAN National Conference)*

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**Introduction**

Social Studies in Nigeria has a special task to play in transforming the nation into a modern state. This includes healing the current social and political wounds of the past decades, nurturing the most recent hopes in good ethnic group relationship and restoration of nationalism as well as the engendering constructive reforms to make Nigeria a just and progressive society once again. The reason(s) for the introduction of the discipline in the Nigerian school curriculum is based on these facts and the pride of place it occupies towards fostering citizenships and national efficiency and self-reliance over the years.

The lack of proper understanding of the role(s) that Social Studies plays has led to the high level of degradation in all ramifications as evidenced throughout the nation, especially as it relates to citizenship and moral values development in the individual. For instance, many people in the country these days seem to pursue achievement rather than integrity, regardless of how it is attained. In fact, this is confirmed by the reckless sharing of money and food stuff during the recently held elections. The business of money and

receiving bribes for votes were instrumental during the process. The Nigerian society, at this stage, can be compared to a business enterprise where customer service and due process, as bureaucratic ethics prescribes, are neglected in the minds of the citizens.

The current realities are numerous economic, political and social unrest and perpetuating of evil, including high cyber fraud, terrorism, banditry, abduction (kidnapping), ritual killings, religious bigotry, cultism, moral decay, embezzlement, social injustice, corruption, and so on. All these vices show low ethical and moral dilemma in society. This paper, therefore, will explain and navigate through these roadmaps of challenges, examining the full conceptualization of Social Studies, its nature and scope as well as its importance to the realities of happenings in Nigeria as a country. Furthermore, conclusions and recommendations were reached.

### **Conceptual Clarifications of Key Terms**

#### ***Social Studies***

Social Studies is a type of learning that aims at creating a free society and responsible as well as responsive citizens who imbibe desirable attitudes and values as well as appropriate mental and physical skills and abilities for meaningful living and interactions. Bayero (2017) defines Social Studies as a dynamic course of instruction with major focus on how to reshape the thinking patterns, social life, skills, attitude, and values of citizens towards accepting progressive development of society. It is necessary to clear this confusion that some critics hold firmly about the meaning of Social Studies as a mere amalgamation of the social science (geography, history, political science, economics, psychology and sociology), while others see it as an integration of relevant aspects of the social sciences for a comprehensive study of man and his environment (Aina & Kpanghan, 2020).

#### ***Navigating***

Navigating refers to all kinds of social information access that enhances collaborative filtering. According to Rosta and Peter (2018), it is mechanism used to enable actions based on current

events happening. This implies that we can use the word as a strategy that can be used to enrich information, explanation and collaborating towards ameliorating a negative phenomenon. It is an outdated style in this present contemporary society to deny information. People say and believe that information is power. In Social Studies, right from the classroom environment, learners are taught and provided with the necessary communication on important issues and concepts so that they can make the right decisions.

### ***Reality***

The term 'reality' cannot be fully grasped without this analogy. According to Justin (2012), man is a minding person. This spirit of minding process is always influenced by beliefs, desires, experiences, purpose, intentions, moral principles, values and other factors. Thus, mankind is a 'meaning' researcher in every sense of the word and the search for meaning propels man into social action. Actions here also involve a relationship with fellow humans. Therefore, Lofland and Lofland (1996) defines meaning as "the culture, norms, understanding, social realities and definition of the situation, ideology, beliefs, worldview and perspectives or stereotypes." Truth be had, no matter the depth of any meaning established, man is always in search of meaning to enable him gain the explanations to a phenomenon or an event that occurs around him. This is what fully describes the concept of reality. However, reality is based on experiences of Social Studies gathered over decades spent dealing with all the solutions that individual learners have acquired and have observed and tested to be true.

### ***Citizenship***

A citizen is a participatory member of a political community. Citizenship is gained by meeting the legal requirements of a national, subnational (state level) or local government. A nation grants certain rights and privileges to list citizens. In return, citizens are expected to obey their country's laws and defend it from its enemies (foreign and domestic). According to the Wayne State University (2022), a

citizenship is a legal status and relation between an individual and a state that entails specific legal rights and duties. The value of citizenship varies from nation to nation, however, an obedient citizen must exercise certain duties to protect his country e.g. voting, holding government office, insurance payments, payment of taxes and obedience to the law of the land at all times, as well as defending the integrity and sovereignty of one's country.

### **Aim and Objectives of Social Studies in Nigeria**

The general objectives of Nigeria's Social Studies are developed to reflect the spirit of the Nigerian philosophy of Education with emphasis laid on the integration of Nigerian citizens into becoming well-meaning and effectively sound citizens of the country. But as further spelt out in the NPE, which this reads; "To live in unity and harmony as an indivisible society in a democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice, to promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding" (FRN, 2024).

After the Second World War, many countries recognized the need to harmonize and unite their people for progress and development. Similarly, Nigeria aimed to foster positive values and a spirit of solidarity among its citizens, as highlighted in the quote above, to contribute to the creation of a united nation. This initiative also sought to instill in learners an empathetic understanding, enabling them to better appreciate the diversity within the national and broader international community (Okonkwo, 2009). According to Onuoha et al. (2019), the following are the general objectives of Social Studies in Nigerian schools, namely:

1. To expose the diverse and ever-changing physical and social environment as a whole including the national resources together with rational use and its conservation for development.
2. To develop in learners the capacity to learn and acquire skills for listening, speaking, reading and writing, but also of developing skills for analysis and inferences.

3. Developing in children positive and desirable values of citizenship and a desire to contribute to the creation of a United Nigeria.
4. To inculcate in learners, sympathetic views which would enable them to appreciate the diversity and interdependence of all members of the society.

These objectives among a whole others presuppose that Social Studies as a school subject have a lot to offer for the growth of the nation. It offers mediation and provides for needed reforms or changes in society as well as cater for its survival by removing barriers between groups and classes within the society as a result of births, occupation, language etc. (Fadeiye, 2005).

### **Nature and Scope of Social Studies**

The nature of Social Studies curriculum is founded on the basis that it is an integrated subject. In this view, the contents are drawn from almost all the social sciences. Its nature is not only interdisciplinary, but a multidisciplinary one. It is interdisciplinary in the sense that each curriculum constitutes an infusion of a variety of subject areas, which are employed in classroom work. It is also multidisciplinary in the sense that the curriculum content of Social Studies embraces knowledge from the social sciences, the natural sciences and humanities. Okam (2016) considers Social Studies as an interdisciplinary and unidisciplinary study which uses an approach that is seen as a combination of subjects like history, geography, economics, sociology, psychology and anthropology among others. With this approach, a time table is planned in such a way that teachers or subject specialists come into class at an appointed time in the day and teach the learners/students content materials from these areas in the name of Social Studies (Kazi, 2007).

Social Studies curriculum is also an evolved synthesis to include contemporary social issues as the society is dynamic. Adeyemi (2014) maintained that the scope of Social Studies Nigeria will remain an ever-changing area as long as there is time, space, and human development. While Kazi (2014) illustrates the typical nature and scope of Social Studies programme in Nigeria to include the following

theme: culture heritage, global perspective, political/economic issues, social history, spatial history, social contracts, technology, citizenship, peace and interdependence.

According to Makinde (2016), sociology and anthropology will contribute to Social Studies in Nigeria by fostering human understanding in the students that focuses on the relationship of individuals or groups of individuals to society as a whole. From the beginning, sociology has been concerned with conflict, changes, and social order. However, the present trend of teaching Social Studies is skewed toward the interdisciplinary approach, the content of sociology which deal with human interaction with each other and with the environment is relevant to Social Studies curriculum, because at the early stage of learning, the students need to understand themselves and the immediate environment where they live. These will help them in understanding the values, customs, roles, culture and expectations of their people for effective participation as they grow into adulthood.

### **Importance of Teaching Social Studies as a Core Subject in Nigerian Schools**

The primary objectives and belief of Social Studies programme is to prepare is to prepare students to be rational, thoughtful, and active citizens who can function productively in a dynamic and interdependent world. Therefore, Social Studies programme should provide a variety of effective and cognitive experiences that can contribute to the recognition of the dignity of the human being. Through an integrated field of Social Studies, learners will acquire necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes as they become lifelong learners. Social Studies programme is founded on the belief in the importance of developing effective citizens that will participate actively in the society and can make informed decisions in line with democratic values.

According to Glaston (2000), a trained Social Studies teacher can help in developing in the learner, the desire to continue acquiring more knowledge, which will help them in their academic pursuits as they will be able to exhibit the following abilities; reading, viewing,

speaking, describing, defining, classifying, hypothesizing, generalizing, predicting, comparing, contracting and analyzing. The content of Social Studies will also help the students in terms of the manipulative skills, when learners are exposed to developing the process by the Social Studies teachers. Also, they will be able to address or handle issues and problems that may have bearing on psychomotor skills, which mostly centers on physical, constructive and creative activities. Consequently, conceptual diagrams and instructional techniques can help expose the relevance of concepts to the learner, the teacher and even the society at large.

Social Studies remain the subject field which, more than any other, informs students of the changing nature of society and attempts to give them the knowledge and skills to participate within society as active and empowered persons and effective citizens. In summary, the subject 'Social Studies' should help students to know, understand and practice the following values: Social Studies has a unique body of content that includes specific knowledge about society, perspectives on society, values negotiation and formation in society, and the processes of social inquiry, values inquiry and social action. Kazzem and Ige (2016) view Social Studies as a subject that has, among others, importance of inclusiveness in human affairs and establishing inclusive practices, the nature of the human rights, entitlements of all people and how to achieve and uphold them; how to exercise care and concern for others, the need for appropriate respect for differences and practical means of showing this, the principles of social justice and how uphold them; ways and means of showing respect for and care of the environment; how to develop and accept individual and collective responsibility as individuals and groups in society; various forms of competition and how to use competitiveness constructively for the purpose of teaching and learning.

### **Historical Development of Social Studies in Nigeria**

To begin with, Social Studies was introduced into Nigeria like other African countries in response to the societal needs and aspirations (Olaleye, 1992). And the use of education for national integration

was key in an attempt to heal the wounds of the civil war and the diversities created as a result of colonialism. Social Studies was not in existence during the colonial era, that is between 1840 - 1960. What, however, existed in most primary and post-primary schools in the country at the time was the teaching of a curriculum area called General knowledge (Udoh, 1989). This meant that the learners were being educated about social issues outside the scope of their environment, society, community and culture. That is, what was taught fully by teachers were merely topics, ideas and concepts from the perspective of European examples. It was an area of great concern to many educators and professionals at the time, hence the search for a unifying integrated discipline that could address the problem of Nigeria's diversity and other needs.

According to Lawal (2003), the development of Social Studies in Nigeria came much earlier than other African countries precisely as early as 1958 with the Ohio State University in America sponsoring some Nigerian sons for training programmes after entering into a collaboration with the Western regional government. The completion of training by these worthy Nigerian sons greatly influenced the introduction of Social Studies. Some of them perceived the social ills that accompanied Nigeria's transition from colonial era to independence. They also understood that the high rate of acculturation among Nigerians and the rate at which the nation's cultural traditions were breaking down could set the country into alarming situations. They, thus, believed that it was better to train others so as to catch up with the global change that was emerging. Social Studies were taught in some teacher training colleges in the defunct Western region of Nigeria on the level of experiment only. "The Social Studies Association of Nigeria" (SOSAN) has been a very strong and formidable pressure group in the promotion of Social Studies in Nigeria. Among the many seminars organized was the 1978 conference held at the University of Ilorin, Kwara State.

### **Using Social Studies to Address Complex Societal Problems: Navigating Beyond the Future**

Nigeria, the supposed giant of Africa, has been weighed down by

the challenges of corruption and national insecurity, weak human resources, socio-political crisis and national development, socio-cultural disunity, cybercrime and the menace of yahoo-yahoo, social change realities educational backwardness, weak values system and poor governance and most importantly, weak citizenship orientation and culture. It is obvious that Social Studies as an integrated school discipline can address these said social issues below:

### **Human Resources for National Security**

Okolobia (2020) once stated that, ‘No nation can develop without paying adequate attention to National Security and sustainable peace’. However, without security, human resource development cannot be achieved in any society. The concept of Human Resource simply means the stock knowledge, habits, social and personal attributes including creativity embodied in the ability to perform labor so as to produce economic value. Oloya and Ebule (2016) further added that human capital represents “the human factor in an organization, the combined intelligence, skills and expertise that gives the organization its distinctive character”. There is also the problem of transformation and integrating new people-centric technologies to changing workforce. It is a given that when a business grows, you will also alter its structure, work plan and even internal processes including compensation and benefits.

While these challenges keep growing, the security network would equally be touched. According to Ogbor (2013), National Security is “the ability to preserve the nation’s physical integrity and territory to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms, to preserve its nature, institutions and governance from disruption from outside and to control its borders”.

### **Communication Technology in Nigeria and Social Studies**

Scientific innovation and technology advancement plays a major role in shaping society. It facilitates employment and creating job productivity. Technology in particular contributes to automation and efficiency across various industries ultimately driving economic

expansion and diverse employment prospects to citizens.

According to Sidharth (2024), video conferencing tools like Zoom and Skype have made remote collaboration seamless, thus enabling teams to work together from anywhere in the world. This presupposes that the internet has democratized access to information making knowledge available to anyone with an internet connection. Through instant messaging learning can be shared with both students and their tutors and feedback can be received within an instant too. Internet tools like the PowerPoint presentations, audio-visuals, online guidance and projectors are all avenues to share information and education to Social Studies students (Hong, 2016).

### **Socio-Cultural Issues and Changing Narratives of Social Studies**

The extent to which ethnic nationalities are able to effectively manage the interplay of ethnic differences determines to what extent a multi-ethnic nation develops without crisis. Historically, Nigeria has come a long way from multi-ethnic entity with political differences and a background focused on the amalgamation of 1914 to the present structure of 36 states and the FCT (Onwuasoigwe, 2023). This explains why Nigeria's socio-cultural problems has merged with the development of the country and denied it the chance of achieving its national aspirations and goals, long after the amalgamation and independence. According to Jekayinfa (2018), the problems range from corrupt leadership, insecurity, religious intolerance, ethnicity, theft, kidnapping to other negative beliefs and attitudes. Hence, the significance of introducing the Social Studies curriculum as a discipline charged with instilling and fostering acceptable societal ideas and other issues and much needed values for growth and progress are undeniably relevant in this dispensation geared towards addressing this identified menace.

Professionals are to ensure that Social Studies bounce back to its position of relevance by the key decisions that will be reached after this great gathering. Through Social Studies learners can become change agents and people who can apply critical reasoning skills before decisions are reached and this can only be possible if

value clarification techniques are employed at every stage of teaching and learning.

### **Socio-Political Trends and Development in Nigeria**

Some of the socio-political challenges facing Nigeria range from insecurity such as banditry and kidnappings especially in the north-west region, continued insurgency by terrorist groups in the north-east and separatist groups. These issues have persisted, because of the differences between groups of people relating to their political beliefs, social class and the like. Consequently, the objective of placing the Nigeria's idea of achieving better constitutional democracy where the rights of every individual would be respected as well as the provision of socio-economic achievement can be achieved is lingering till date.

### **Socio-Cultural Narratives and Disunity in Nigeria**

Socio-cultural issues are those influences which distract people's feelings, values, beliefs, behaviors, attitudes and interactions as a result of social class, religious beliefs and social organizations, etc. Nigeria is a nation with over 250 different ethnic tribes. Each tribe has its own distinct culture and set of traditions even though there is what can be seen as assort of universal belief and behaviors. Human activities and insecurity have rendered the weak achievement of the aspiration embodied in Nigeria's National development objectives as clearly enshrined in the MDG's and in the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 constitution a fantasy and a fallacy (Otete, 2024). The National Pledge and the National emblem which represents the implicit and explicit pledge of total allegiance made by people of the country near useless.

### **Aspects of Social change towards addressing Present Realities**

Addressing this topic requires us to examine the concept of social change. Because it deals with the present social realities of the evolution of the human societies. As a matter of fact, as Solaja (2020) asserts, "human societies over time have experienced constant

alterations in social values, norms, institutions, relationships and stratification as a result of both internal and external forces of change. “The external change here refers to unavoidable circumstances of issues that occur beyond human intervention or help. The disaster may occur on a large scale affecting an entire nation. While the internal forces are usually events that occur on a small scale causing structural re-arrangements with far reaching influences on the social fabric of the society.

According to Olagbaju (2015), the term ‘social change’ is simply an “alteration within the social structure characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behaviors, social organization or value system”. This change may occur in society as a result of momentous shake up in the social and cultural elements that form an enduring network of relationships in which interaction between people, organization, communities and nations became restructured. Sometimes social change is either positive or negative in nature. The positive change brings about improvement in the entire or some parts of the society e.g. in education, economy, culture, family, law, politics and religion. But the negative social change depicts dysfunction in the entire or some parts of the social structure which in turn destabilizes the order of the day in society (Olulube, 2011). Some of the identified characteristics of social change that are noticeable in every society can be classified into 4 namely:

- a. Change occurs everywhere naturally: since the society and activities of human engagement is not static socially, political, economically, culturally occurs repeatedly.
- b. The notion that changes can be intentional yet often unplanned, e.g. the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which was introduced in the 1980s by the World Bank and the IMF a strategy to recuperate funds from owing countries of the world e.g. (developing Nations).
- c. Social change often generates controversy e.g. motions from the developed world e.g. United States, Canada, etc. that homosexual rights (i.e. same-sex marriage) should be accepted by Nigeria and other developing countries has

caused controversy involving the government, military and religious leaders (Solaja, 2020, own Research).

The popular Emile Durkheim once said, that “when the population of a society increases or becomes denser, the only viable way in which the people can survive is through resource/task sharing, specialization and complementary roles. The causes of these are attributed to the erosion of our Nigerian social life and cultural values. Some writers’ belief that colonialism and its affiliates neocolonialism and capitalism borderless economy and weak democracy has been incompatible with our Nigerian local.

### **Through Values and Citizenship Education for Sustainable Development**

Citizenship education is the actual initiation of the people into the values of the society and it is the process which encourages all the efforts geared towards making every member of the society recognize his or her rightful duties and responsibilities to the nation. It is relevant because it gives young people political education that will enable them participate in democratic processes. There is the need for a wide conscientization and advocacy of national integration and consciousness among the citizens for values acquisition through Social Studies.

### **Role of Social Studies and Influences Beyond Current Realities**

Social Studies provide a way of looking at the society in order to understand its structure and its problems and to look for ways of solving these problems. Social Studies thus provide students with knowledge of the history, geography, social and political institutions and the psychological intricacies of daily existence in Nigeria. It is an interdisciplinary subject that cuts across sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, psychology, history and geography. The distinguishing elements between Social Studies and these disciplines are “its ability to extract some basic concepts that enables students to understand their fellow citizens holistically hence Social Studies

seeks to integrate knowledge from the various traditional disciplines (Woodman, 2001). Through Social Studies, values are taught in Nigeria at both the primary and secondary levels (Gabriel, 2008).

### **Conclusion**

No society can thrive except its members behave in ways acceptable and portray moral characters that describes the culture of the people. Consequently, the teaching of Social Studies concepts will greatly address and minimize issues of national unity and security. The overarching philosophy and objective of Social Studies curriculum provides an opportunity for human capital development, ensuring national security and moral development of the citizenry. Hence, the recent realization and full adaptation of social and civic studies as a new nomenclature for Social Studies. Kudos to the SOSAN executives for pushing harder and engaging in dialogue until our dream was realised at the stakeholders' dialogue with policy committees in Abuja.

### **Suggestions**

Kazeem and Etebom (2022) have fully noted that institutional frame works at community level have potentials, but do not fully understand the tenets and pride of place Social Studies occupy in the society and how it can contribute to the realization of socioeconomic development in Nigeria. So, the following suggestions are given:

- a) Social Studies professionals should engage in extensive national values reorientation all over Nigeria.
- b) Social Studies and civics education curriculum should emphasize more of patriotic citizenship and leadership spirit in our civil society
- c) Proper renewed interest in the subject and propagating these to other stake holders until they understand the need for the subject to be offered across all levels of the education system in Nigeria.

- d) National budget for the education sector should be increased with emphasis on boosting staff development while the procurement of teaching resources in Social Studies and instructional delivery should be enhanced.
- e) The Nigerian political leadership should be more committed or dedicated to current realities of events in governance, ICT improvement, human resource building and implementation of policy statements.
- f) The society and other stake holders should be interested in promoting the spirit of responsible citizenship through Social Studies for the transmission of societal values that can change the negative tendencies and behaviors eating up individual lives.

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