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PARALLEL CRISES: NATIONAL VALUES, CIVICS,  
SECURITY, RELIGIOUS AND NATIONAL VALUES  
CURRICULA: TIME FOR SOCIAL STUDIES TO MAKE A  
COMEBACK TO NIGERIA'S SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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Chimezie **NJOKU**

*Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology  
Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria*

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**Abstract**

*Social Studies as a field of study is designed among other things to promote civic competence which is the skill and attitude students need to become a citizen. It is specifically aimed at inculcating national consciousness, unity as well as the right type of values in the students among other things. Unfortunately, Social Studies in Nigeria's educational system has become a survivor that have endured many 'tossing ups, tossing downs, and tossing around' the school system. Its surviving strategy, coping mechanism or longevity can be said to be because of its flexibility and its all-inclusive eclectic nature. Social Studies programmes have always been subsumed into other programmes; Civics for Senior Secondary instead of Social Studies, Religious and National Values (RNV) for Basic School instead of Social Studies etc., making it very difficult for the subject to achieve its aim and objectives. The issue is no longer that Social Studies survives but the question is whether Social Studies should survive? Since the answer is YES, Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) must rise to the occasion and restore Social Studies to its*

*rightful position in Nigeria's educational system. This literature-based paper explored briefly the history and development of Social Studies as a school subject in Nigeria and United State then discussed the development and achievements of these association; National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) of USA and Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) of Nigeria. The insights from the study led to the author's conclusion that SOSAN can put Social Studies at its rightful position in Nigeria's educational system. The paper then suggested some practical steps to achieve this aim. It also acknowledged the challenges but still of the opinion that the challenges are not overwhelming.*

**Keywords:** Social Studies, Curriculum, Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN), National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

### **Introduction**

Education, family, religion etc. are the basic institutions of the society which are established to lead children and youths towards the values of the society. Be that as it may, education is still the major institution for individual and societal development and also the major institution that can institute and effect change. The purpose of education in any society including Nigeria is to make sure that the students are well prepared for real life. For a country like Nigeria with a rich diversity in geography, culture, values and beliefs, students must be thought the right types of values which are fundamental for success in life. This can only be achieved when the educational system is designed to provide the students with a value system.

The adoption of Social Studies as a school subject in the Nigerian Educational System was because of the need for relevance. The most important reason among other reasons for its adoption in Africa according to Ogundare (2003) was that Social Studies is supposed to enable every school-going child in Africa to understand and appreciate peoples' interaction with their cultural, social and physical environment, value home and heritage, cultivate skills and

attitudes expected of citizens and learn how to communicate ideas in different ways.

Because of this, a conference was held in 1968 where African Social Studies Programme (ASSP) was introduced and many African countries that participated in the conference including Nigeria adopted the programme. The countries that adopted the African Social Studies Programme (ASSP) in the 1968 conference according to Adesina (1977) were the following; Botswana, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe etc. He also observed that almost all the member countries offer Social Studies at the secondary level.

Nigeria is among one of the African countries yet to offer the subject at the senior secondary level, not only that Social Studies is now no more a single subject at the basic level rather subsumed into Religious and National Values (RNV). It is obvious the usefulness of this subject to the moral and intellectual development of a child as well as equipping a child with the necessary skills for nation-building. Social Studies as AJose (2001) rightly pointed out is a child of necessity aimed at fulfilling certain missions for any society. This is because according to him, by its peculiar nature and characteristics it is thought in schools in line with the prevailing societal values. It is integrative and also incorporates other fields of study, It is a subject that cannot be thought in our schools otherwise.

Social Studies syllabus for the senior secondary school was prepared in 1985 by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council but it was never implemented, in 1998 it was reviewed by the National policy on Education and Social Studies was introduced in the senior secondary school curriculum to be offered as an alternative to either history, geography, government or literature in English (FRN, 1998). But unfortunately, it was immediately changed.

Since then, Social Studies has been continuously tossed up, down and around the Nigerian educational system, and has been cast and recast into different forms and shapes desired. This is a dangerous situation for Nigeria as a nation especially at this present time when the country needs a total reorientation of its values. The

present political and economic situation in Nigeria has a multiplier effect on the value system, corrupt society produces corrupt citizens. There are lapses in the way value education is being thought in our schools because of the constraints Social Studies as a subject has faced and we are seeing the results. Social Studies stakeholders cannot afford to continue to keep quiet. Nigerian youths need the intellectual power to recognize societal problems, develop critical investigation into them and be able to think of possible solutions and consequences. This type of training that will help them be more aware of their environment and develop adequate values and skills will be better done under Social Studies curriculum.

The aim of this paper therefore is to emphasize the role of Social Studies in a changing society especially the present Nigeria and the need for stakeholders especially Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) to among other things see to the implementation of 1998 National Policy on Education (NPE) provision on Social Studies. And to achieve this aim, the paper examined; the role of National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) in the achievement of Social Studies aim and objectives in the United States; examined the role of Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) in the achievement of Social Studies aim and objectives in Nigeria; also examined how SOSAN can apply some of the NCSS's strategies to position Social Studies on its rightful position.

### **Brief History of Social Studies in Nigeria**

The first Social Studies programme after independence evolved during major experiments with educational reforms in Nigeria; the Ashby Commission, the Banjo Report, and the Dike Report in the early 1960s. These were all about the concept of a school that would extend secondary education to many boys and girls and not to only the academic elite (Adesina, 1977).

Social Studies started to spread to other parts of the country from the western region. In the northern part of the country, the Northern Nigeria Teacher Education Project (NNTEP) played an important role in facilitating the introduction of Social Studies. According to Onyabe (1979) the NNTEP co-sponsored by the Northern Region Ministry of Education and the University of

Wisconsin, developed and tested primary school teachers' education materials in five subject areas of which Social Studies was among. And in 1969, the six northern states introduced Social Studies into their educational system under the auspices of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (Onyabe, 1979)

In the Eastern region, Social Studies was largely influenced by Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) because Social Studies found its way into the school curriculum after the Social Studies Association of Nigerian's (SOSAN) conference of April 1971.

The Department of Social Studies of Comprehensive High School, Aiyetoro developed the first Social Studies programme for secondary schools in Nigeria. It also made available instructional materials to be used for the teaching and learning of Social Studies (Adeyemi 1986). According to Makinde (1979), the Ministry of Education of the Western region also gave the department the task of developing a syllabus for year one and year two secondary schools.

The implementation of the 1977 and 1981 National Policy on Education subsequently approved the teaching of Social Studies in both primary and secondary schools. (Busari 1992). The programme developed by the Social Studies department of Comprehensive High School, Aiyetoro was used in most of the states that adopted Social Studies.

According to Ogundare (2003), Nigeria Education and Research Council (NERC) in 1981 formed a panel of Social Studies experts known as the National Committee on Primary Education Social Studies Curriculum Project. The primary purpose of this committee was to develop an appropriate national Social Studies curriculum for all primary schools and to critically review the existing primary school Social Studies curriculum. This according to him led to the 1983 national primary school Social Studies curriculum and in 1988, the National Implementation Committee on National Policy on Education and the National Primary Education Commission developed another National Social Studies curriculum for primary schools.

In 2008, the school system changed to 9-3-4 educational system, the National Council on Education (NCE) directed the NERDC to restructure and align the existing primary and junior secondary

school curricula to meet the objectives of the 9-Year Basic Education in the context of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 1981) brought Social Studies to its supposed prominence when it made it a compulsory subject for primary and Junior Secondary School (JSS) levels. Social Studies today is taught in many colleges of education and many Nigerian universities.

In 2012, the school curriculum again changed. The 9-Year basic education curriculum was revised, according to Obioma (2012) because of global best practices among other things was the reason. Social Studies is no more a single subject that is compulsory for Junior Secondary school students but rather Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, Civic Education, Security Education and Social Studies created a new cluster of revised Basic Education Curriculum subject called Religious and National Values.

### **David Warren Saxe's 1991 Historical Sketch of Social Studies in the United States**

Social Studies according to Saxe (1991) is a survivor, enduring as a mainstay of the American curriculum for nearly 100 years. He went further to explain that, Its longevity is not because of the curricular power of Social Studies and also not because of well-trained professionals maintaining its influence but rather because Social Studies has this near-universal acceptance of its flexibility that allows practitioners to cast and recast its form and substance into whatever shape they desire.

According to him, the major attack on the comprehensive nature of Social Studies was launched in the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*. He said that in that publication the policymakers challenged educators to reinstate subject-based instruction by specifically calling for improved teaching and learning in history, geography, and economics. They argued that the cause of the rising tide of mediocrity that threatened the future of their nation is because of ineffective curricula that do not have a central purpose any longer.

Before this criticism according to him, seven years earlier, some Social Studies theorists noted the increasing problems of sustaining a curricular that had expanded beyond the ability of practitioners to understand and articulate the major veins of this delicate social miscellany. Again, six years later in Charlottesville at the 1989 education summit, the then president, George H. W. Bush, and the nation's governors, led by Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, recommended proficiency in the traditional content areas of history, geography, English, Mathematics and Science as vital national education goals. Social Studies was not mentioned (Saxe, 1991)

In their "Goals 2000: Educate America Act" of 1994, it included that, all children will graduate from grades 4, 8, and 12 having shown competency over challenging subject matter in English, Mathematics, Science, Foreign language, Civics and Government, Economics, Arts, History, and Geography. Again, Social Studies was not included. (Saxe 1991)

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) leaders knowing that they will not be involved in the writing of the standards in history, geography, civics and government, and economics, designed and financed its standards, *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*, in 1994. The NCSS standards were designed to complement the four traditional disciplines within social studies. The standards were propelled to schools as a mechanism to unite the four major subject areas (history, geography, civics, government and economics) with other social studies areas (sociology, anthropology, archaeology, psychology). (Saxe 1991)

According to him, on January 18, 1995, the U.S. Senate condemned the *National Standards for History*, consequently, there was a void in the school curriculum and the NCSS standards quickly filled the gap showing that Social Studies is a viable component of school life. NCSS took the opportunity of this opening and maintained their presence and influenced the control of state teacher certification programs in colleges and universities.

Social Studies professionals continued to man the teacher certification programs and State departments of education also defer to colleges and universities' Social Studies professors for the training of their teachers which he described as training the square

pegs of Social Studies to fit in the round holes of history-centred state standards.

In his words, the custodians of history tried to maintain the traditional history curriculum but Social Studies practitioners continuously demanded that every content area must pass the test of social utility as a subject area that contributed to the understanding and resolving contemporary social problems. Some state standards according to him showed a renewed interest in history-centered and other distinct subject matters and removed Social Studies as the title, many others changed their curricula into content-centred standards with Social Studies remaining as the banderol, while some still maintained the comprehensive Social Studies.

According to him, at the elementary grade level in the US schools, Social Studies is organized and taught as an integrative and interdisciplinary subject, while at the high school (secondary school) level Social Studies teaching and learning are organized by courses in the academic disciplines

In 1994, the NCSS published *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*. Citing the need to promote civic ideals and principles for life in the twenty-first century, the standards consisted of ten interdisciplinary thematic strands as a guide for developing the Social Studies curriculum. In 2010, the council reviewed the published standards and published National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning and Assessment. The NCSS standards have been continuously reviewed from time to time till date.

### **The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN)**

The National Council for the Social Studies is a US-based Association dedicated to supporting Social Studies education. It was founded in 1921 and is the largest organization in the United States to focus exclusively on Social Studies education according to (NCSS website). According to the website, historically, the organization was established as a coordinating entity and clearing house that evolved



at a time when Social Studies was deeply involved in disagreement on scope and sequence.

NCSS is affiliated with various state level Social Studies associations; the Middle States Council for the Social Studies, the Washington State Council for the Social Studies, the New York UFT Association for the Teaching of Social Studies, the Michigan Council for the Social Studies, Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies and Virginia Council for the Social Studies. (NCSS website)

The central mission of NCSS according to their website is to improve the integrated teaching of Social Studies at all levels of education from elementary school to college and graduate school. They issue bulletins on specific topics and specific subfields within the larger discipline of Social Studies. They publish several journals which according to their website, its aim is to strike a balance of theoretical content and practical teaching ideas.

According to their website, the NCSS membership represents K–12 classroom teachers, (kindergarten to SS1) college and university faculty members, curriculum designers and specialists, Social Studies supervisors, and leaders in the various disciplines that comprise the Social Studies. The National Curriculum Standards provides an articulated K–12 Social Studies program. This serves as a framework for the integration of other national standards in Social Studies. This includes U.S. and world history, civics and government, geography, global education, and economics. NCSS standards ensure that integrated social science, behavioural science, and humanities approach for achieving academic and civic competence is available to guide Social Studies decision makers in K–12 schools.

### **Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) and the Achievement of Social Studies Aims and Objectives**

The Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) is a Nigeria based organization. According to the association's website, it is an organization of learners, teachers, educators, curriculum developers, writers, and qualified educational practitioners in the field of social education and or accepted related disciplines. It is a professional body which consists of professionally qualified teachers who have their origins largely from the social sciences and

humanities. SOSAN is purely concerned with improving and strengthening the teaching and learning of Social Studies throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

SOSAN was formally launched in 1972 during the first National Conference which was held at Oyo State. The year 1971 was significant in the development of Social Studies, for it was then that, for the first time, the subject was considered by Nigerian Educational Research Council as one of the subjects for which a national syllabus was to be produced (Adesina, 1977). SOSAN was not in existence during the pilot stage of Social Studies development in Nigeria. The pilot activities in the Social Studies project in the then Western Region provided the base for the emergence of SOSAN (Ogundare, 2003) According to him, the 1970s was marked as the stage of controversy and reluctant learners, SOSAN's main function this period was to "market" Social Studies to classroom teachers and government officials in the Ministries of Education, and that between 1971 and 1974, SOSAN was concerned with the assignment of having the concept of integration instead of multidisciplinary clearly defined and appropriate curriculum produced for Social Studies in the primary, secondary and teacher education.

Adeyemi (1986) collaborated Adesina (1977) when he said that the introduction of UPE in 1976 forced many teachers into reluctant learners. Teachers of various subjects were drafted into teaching Social Studies and to attend special orientation courses organized for them by the Universities or the Ministries of Education in collaboration with SOSAN. Special attention was paid to the practical orientation of teachers in the methodology and strategies of teaching the subjects during the Annual Conference of SOSAN since its inception.

The Social Studies Association of Nigeria had been able to achieve the following among other things: Promotion of teaching and learning of Social Studies; Organization of workshops, seminars, and conferences on many occasions for the improvement of teaching the subject, development of the subject and its teachers; Publications of journals and conference proceedings; and Assisting

the Government in the selection of suitable Social Studies textbook for primary and secondary schools.

SOSAN in Nigeria is equivalent of NCSS in the US, they have many things in common; the structure, their mission and some of their activities. They are all both old associations. The only area where I see a huge gap is in the achievement. NCSS improved over time, today they have taken control of Social Studies in the country. Their standard guides everything that happens around Social Studies, they control and is in charge of teacher certification programs in Social Studies among other things. SOSAN as a Social Studies body like NCSS can also achieve the same in Nigeria.

These are some of the activities of NCSS that I believe SOSAN can emulate to put Social Studies in its rightful position in Nigeria's educational system; SOSAN should have a Social Studies National Curriculum Standard that will contain a detailed framework for teaching, learning and assessment in Social Studies. This standard should be used by ministries of education, teacher educators, individual teachers, and parents. Just like NCSS Social Studies Standard, SOSAN Standard should offer Nigeria's educators, parents, and policymakers the essential conceptual framework for Social Studies curriculum design and development to prepare informed and active citizens.

It should contain the framework for professional deliberation and planning of the Social Studies curriculum especially for nursery through secondary. This Standard should address overall Social Studies curriculum development, which classroom teachers, teacher educators, and school administrators can use as a starting point for the systematic design and development of an effective Social Studies curriculum.

This association should take control of Teacher Certification Programmes in Social Studies. This is particularly important because it will guide and monitor the Social Studies curriculum at all levels because it will do the following; develop a curriculum framework that focuses both on short-term content goals and long-term Social Studies goals; guide the development of pre-service and in-service teacher education programs and courses; be used to review and evaluate curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices in

Social Studies; provide teachers with learning expectations that are consistent with Social Studies goals across all levels; enable both pre-service and in-service teachers to plan instructions consistent with Social Studies goals and introduces them to the nature and purposes of Social Studies. Also, SOSAN journals and Social Studies books must include lesson plans and guidelines for the implementation of the Standards.

### **Conclusion**

Social Studies in Nigeria is a survivor just like Saxe (1991) rightly pointed out that Social Studies in the US is a survivor. It will always survive because its benefits cannot be neglected or ignored for a long time at any point in time. Since its very inception, Social Studies education both in Nigeria and in the US has overcome several squabbles and challenges. The core idea of an integrated field of study has been under scrutiny since its earliest days. It is quite unfortunate that a subject like this with great potentials of turning things around in Nigeria especially this period that all types of vices are ravaging the country is being played down.

### **Way Forward**

Social Studies Association of Nigeria is an extraordinarily strong association that has been in existence for an exceedingly long time, it is time for it to refocus its attention to save Social Studies and position it to where it belongs. I believe that if SOSAN adopts some of the strategies of NCSS discussed above, the aim of this paper will be achieved. I know there are obstacles and challenges, especially corruption, poor value system, lack of integrity etc., but I also know that they are not insurmountable with dedication, hard work and focused attention.

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