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THE RISE AND "FALL" OF SOCIAL STUDIES IN
NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

BY

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NRSUKA.
The teaching of the Social Sciences in primary and secondary schools in communitarian and topical forms was found defective in providing a functional social education to Nigerian youth. The high rate of moral pugnacity and social crimes involving youths was most blamed on the inculcation of the then-existing primary and secondary social science programme. The programme was consequently replaced with Social Studies at the primary and Junior Secondary School (JSS) levels. The Social Studies was thus conceived as aimed primarily at providing citizenship education for young Nigerians. The recent quest for Citizenship Education as a separate course of study in primary and secondary schools by some state Ministries of Education and Education experts was an indication of expected failure of Social Studies. How was Social Studies fare in Nigerian education system?

Introduction

The conventional aim in formal education is to groom the subjects (usually children and youth) for effective living in a society. A functional education system prepares citizens for productive economic life; for responsible and fulfilling social life, and for the overall development of self and the society. These cardinal objectives are central to the academic, social and recreational programmes in school schedules. However, some programmes, in a way, stress more than others, the aspect of one or more of the educational aims. For instance, although social studies have appreciable intellectual component, their major thrust is in re-orientating the character, developing values and social skills, as well as changing the social attitudes of youths in consonance with the national goals.

Social Studies was introduced when it was realized that the various social sciences (Government/Civics, Geography, Economics, History, etc.) were not living up to their expectations in charting the course of good social interaction, tolerance and harmony in Nigerian society. The increase in rate of corruption, lack of respect for elders and constituted authorities, social disorder, and perpetration of numerous other specific ills in Nigerian society by Nigerians showed the foundation of social education or youth in Nigerian schools to be faulty. Identification
The Social Studies curricula have been implemented for some years now. Their functionality has not quite been empirically determined and already efforts are being made at recent curriculum conferences and workshops for the introduction of yet, different curriculum materials for the citizenship education of Nigerian children and youths. The call presupposes that Social Studies have not been functional enough. But why? Is the problem with the curricula, the implementation or the evaluation techniques? Is it with the teacher, the learner or the society in general? The later sections of this paper approach these questions by discussing the rise of Social Studies, the nature of the curricula, the practical curriculum implementation approaches, the possible causes of the "fail" and hence the rationale for the call for new programmes, and the most plausible ways of resuscitating the faltering course.

THE RISE OF SOCIAL STUDIES


The efforts of the team attracted the interest of CESAC and the sponsorship of Ford Foundations. The combined efforts culminated in further advances in the quality and effectiveness of social studies instructional personnel in the school and the revised and enlarged edition of the curriculum material finally published for use in lower classes of secondary schools. Some regional governments in Nigeria did not immediately embrace the idea of Social Studies.

At the continental level, there were moves to introduce Social Studies into the programme of schools in African countries in consonance with what obtained in America, Great Britain and other western countries.

An international conference was held in Nairobi in 1968 to discuss issues in incorporating social studies into the curricula of schools in Africa. The conference attended by eleven African countries (including...}).
Haryana) and some foreign observers resolved inter alia that Social Studies should be introduced into African schools. The conference structured curriculum guidelines to be adapted to the peculiar circumstances of interested African states. This development triggered off chains of curriculum innovations of different scales in some of the African countries in attendance.

In Nigeria for instance, the historic curriculum conference of 1969 endorsed the Neumann resolution and recommended the teaching of Social Studies in the primary and JS schools. The later conference created the basis for the nationwide propagation of the Social Studies ideas being worked and developed at local levels even before the continental call. Further conferences and workshops were organized by especially the NNEC to write, refine and critique Social Studies curriculum materials and implementation strategies for TECs, primary and JS schools (NNEC, 1972).

Incidentally, there was lack of spontaneity in the adoption of the curriculum material in some states of Nigeria then. However, the transfer of the co-ordination, sponsorship and control of primary education in the country by Federal Military Government, and the subsequent efforts to unify and standardize educational practice across the country compelled all the (reluctant) states to introduce Social Studies. By 1976, all the schools in the country were teaching Social Studies. The programme has therefore lasted for over 16 years in Nigerian schools. Its effect is supposed to be manifesting in the overt behaviour of youths now.

At the tertiary education level, the universities of Ibadan, Ahmadu Bello and later Jos, and some colleges of education variously mounted course and certificate programmes in Social Studies/Education. Other universities and colleges of education followed suit soon after. Indeed, it would appear that the tertiary institutions established Social Studies departments years after the commencement of the programme in most primary and secondary schools. As will be seen shortly, this late stage in training of teachers for Social Studies instruction has serious implications for the successful implementation of the programme at the primary and JS school levels.
The primary objective of social studies in primary and J.S. schools is to provide suitable learning experiences for functional social education of the pupils. It is expected that learning the stipulated concepts through the suggested activities would provide the pupils opportunities to acquire some basic social skills and values requisite for effective and productive living in a democracy. Training of the pupils in good citizenship, social tolerance and unity consciousness is also implied in the curriculum.

For the J.S., the Social Studies curriculum contents were drawn from 17 chosen namely:

- Social environment, physical environment, cooperation and conflict, Institutions, civic rights and responsibilities
- Culture and identification, Nigerian cultural patterns and historical origin, common heritage and national symbols, leadership and fellowship, development, societal changes over time, science, technology and society, National economic life, The origin of Man, socialization, its inception and progression, The world and its People, and World Transport and communication.

Eight of these themes are programmed for each of the J.S. class levels. For each of such programmed theme, a number of specific instructional objectives are suggested. Some of the objectives are in the affective and psychomotor domain, but a greater number are of the lower cognitive process types. The contents are also clearly elucidated with the specific theme (points) to be emphasized in class clearly noted. Instructional techniques and necessary audio-visual materials are also recommended for each instructional theme. However, there was no suggested approach to the evaluation of instructional outcome. The teacher therefore exercises freedom in employing any evaluation technique they deem fit. The silence of the curriculum over suggesting evaluation approaches could be informed by an assumption of expertise in instructional evaluation on the part of the Social Studies teachers. This is an over assumption and its implications are a shortcoming in the curriculum are indicated in due course.

In the case of primary schools the curriculum module, which is the teachers' instructional handbook, are as expected, slightly more detailed than the J.S. curriculum. The modules specify the following for each Social Studies topic.

.../3...
Content element, which is a breakdown of the content into small units that make up the subject matter.

Specific instructional objectives:

Pupil’s activity:
- Teaching aids and teaching hints;
- Suggested arrangement “techniques” and
- Expected duration (in weeks)

This model view assessment as an integral part of teaching which should be performed as the suggested learning activities (called auxiliary or supported) are being carried out. The subject matter are to be learned at the primary level by the pupils before they are permitted to advance to the next objactives. Specific evaluation procedures are recommended for the assessment of mastery of each auxiliary performance. The same procedures recommended for formative evaluation are suggested for adoption in determining the level of mastery of the terminal performance implied in the instructional objectives. The recommended assessment “techniques” include: achievement, class discussion, demonstration, enumeration, explanation, observation, group discussion, home work, inquiry/research, dialogue, oral narration/storytory, oral test, oral question and answer, suggestion, written composition test, etc. Whether these are all assessment techniques or not will become evident in the context of this paper.

PRESENTATION OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

It is quite obvious that the teaching of Social Studies in primary and secondary school is subject to the inculcation of the Civic and Moral values. The teachers simply transmit the points with the facts and information embodied in the subject matter and leave with them the mandate of expectancy to re-examine the facts on demand during evaluation.

At the primary school level, such for instructional direction must be taken not from the specific instructional objectives and specific material and limits but from the certificate examination question format which act as models. The ultimate aim in classroom interaction has become to focus on to impart the basic facts and information they would require to respond correctly to the structured items of tests typical of the certificate examination. The numerous intervent stirring activities specified in the curriculum are not organized for the pupils. The auxiliary
The affective and psychomotor components of the instructional objectives are not consciously pursued either during instructional interaction or in performance assessment.

At the JSS level, the procedure is the same. Social Studies instruction only involves pupils in watching and listening to teacher expounding concepts, demonstrating and illustrating points, and while lessons are written on blackboard. The teacher may ask few questions in the course of the "lecture." Group discussions, discussions, interview of resource persons, role playing, problem solving, oriented projects and other activities substituted to facilitate the attainment of the objectives in Social Studies are however relegated. Moreover, the dominant evaluation technique is testing which usually focuses on the lower cognitive processes. Depreciation, interview/discussion, sociometry and other indicated evaluation techniques are being relegated to denunciation.

The Social Studies curriculum guides are rich enough in content and design, and can form sound bases for citizenship training of Nigerian youth if appropriately implemented. Their specifications can guide any average trained Social Studies teacher in providing suitable learning experiences for the development of the ideal social skills and values. The trouble with the course is therefore not inherent in the curriculum materials per se.

One identifiable trouble with social studies is the disparity in the intent and purpose of planned and implemented curricula. The actual instructional approaches being adopted by Social Studies teachers at all levels and their favored evaluation techniques of testing are at times at variance with the curriculum provisions. While the curriculum were designed for fostering in pupils the social skills, values and attitudes requisite for constructive living in a united, orderly and democratic Nigerian, the intent of the implementers is to feed pupils with adequate and suitable factual information that would enable them pass the First School Leaving Certificate examinations and the Junior Secondary Certificate examinations in Social Studies. The affective components of the course objective which should be highly weighted in importance are less stressed. Pupils are lectured to become good citizens, united, honest, tolerant and socially just.
could good result be achieved through this?

Another trouble with social studies is the technique of evaluation.

One evaluation technique recommended in the primary school social studies curriculum and indicated in the SS curriculum are quite suitable for the assessment of pupils' auxiliary and terminal performances in the course. All the domains of objectives are provided for. However, the certificate examination designed by minority of education favor the requirement of only the cognitive dimensions of the course which easily lend themselves to testing. Teachers regard the certificate examination criteria as models and consequently adopt their format when assessing the outcomes of classroom instruction. They de-emphasize those techniques used in internal examinations and probably de-emphasize the course content not favored in external examinations.

The quality of instructional personnel is another source of trouble with social studies. It is reported in literature that the majority of teachers during the effective implementation of Social Studies programme in schools in the absence of well qualified teachers (Fenton 1988), Gbadebo (1985) and Salama (1986) observed that Social Studies in being taught by teachers trained in other subject areas. There were very few teachers trained in the content and methodology of Social Studies in the course of school system hence the introduction of Social Studies was in progress. The teaching of the new course, therefore, fell into the hands of many other teachers. Some of the teachers lack the proper attitude towards the course. Whether lack knowledge of the philosophy of the course. For Gbadebo (1985) these categories of teachers may at best pass on factual information (knowledge) about the immediate and wider societies to the pupils but not educating them for good citizenship.

Another source of trouble in the general tone of the society. The school operates as a society. The two function in concert to shape the behaviour of pupils. Good citizenship cannot be instilled in pupils by neglecting teachers marginalizing their frustration. Moreover, good citizenship cannot be easily learnt and demonstrated willfully in a very corrupt and perverting society which is insensitive to the welfare of its citizens. The menace of social studies therefore seems impracticable in Nigerian society. For the prevention and internalization of the message, the...
The lack of which nurture desperation, should be within the reach of the citizens. When the welfare of citizens becomes the concern of leadership, then the foundation of love-for-country which social studies in expected to evolve and sustain would have been established. The course might not successfully combat the monumental social rift in Nigeria in isolation.

The Ways Out

There are ways out of each of the social studies troubles discussed above. The suggested approaches would help to redress the trouble and reorientate the confidence reposed in the course as an effective means of citizenship education of Nigerian youth. The suggestions are:

1. Quality Training of Social Studies Teachers.

The training programmes of social studies teachers are cognitive-acquisitive. They only impart social studies student teachers with the knowledge of the obligations, attitudes and conduct expected of good citizens and how best to pass on same type of information to pupils. Only limited attempt is made at inculcating good citizenship qualities in the teachers. The teachers therefore preach to pupils what they do not practice which is fundamental in effective teaching. Herals and values cannot be inculcated merely by telling.

2. Emphasizing Teacher-oriented Teaching.

Since the external examination of terminal performances of pupils focus on the cognitive domain objectives, the major focus of teachers' in-course assessment should be on the non-cognitive domain objectives. The rekindling of interest in the non-cognitive outcome of social studies instruction could re-orientate pupils' learning and pave the way for acquisition of relevant social skills, attitudes and values. The grades assigned by teachers after careful and systematic observation and discussion of the social behaviour of the pupils should be highly prized as more relevant measure of pupils' achievement in social studies.


The welfare of children should become primary to the various levels of government. Children should, to a reasonable extent, be insulated from the deprivations consequent on the nation's economic downturn. This caring would form the basis of the love-for-country being propagated.
by Social Studies. A citizen cannot become good to the society he
conducts honestly, worthily and sincerely.

OPPOSITION

The need for a new programme on citizenship education cannot solve
the problem of ineffective social/citizenship education of Nigerian youths.

The problem with social studies is not structural per se but misdirection
of its implementation. Any other programme designed to provide
effective social/citizenship education will also fall victim of the
typical downward spiral highlighted in this paper. Norm, values and
attitudes cannot be changed or taught through telling and evaluating.

The instructors have to live what they teach and the society
have to live enough to stimulate love in her citizens.

The programmes of social studies in schools were well conceived,
adequately planned but are being badly implemented. Positive change
in the implementation strategies as suggested would reciprocate the
programmes and upgraded the new quarter.

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