

# **TOWARDS IMPROVING THE CURRICULUM AND TEACHING OF SOCIAL STUDIES IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS USING INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

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## **Abstract**

The paper focuses on ways of improving the curriculum and teaching of Social Studies in Nigerian schools with the aid of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). To do this, the paper looks at the following issues: the need and role of ICT in improving the teaching and curriculum of Social Studies in Nigerian schools. However, some challenges which affect the use of ICT in performing this role are highlighted and suggestions are made on how to surmount these challenges.

## **Introduction**

Schools are social institutions established by the society and assigned the responsibility of teaching those aspects of the culture that have been formally selected and systematically organized for transmission to the on-coming generations and curriculum is the instrument which helps the school to carry out this responsibility.

Curriculum as defined by Onyemerekaya (2006) is a pre-conceived intentions or mapped out plans of all learning activities deliberately chosen and directed by the school which learners follow to reach pre-determined goals. It is at the heart of the educational process and is used as an instrument for implementing society's educational goals. The society is dynamic and is in constant growth. There is always need to improve on the curriculum to take care of the changing ideologies and situations in the society. Social Studies being a humanistic discipline aimed at producing students who are creative, patriotic, responsible and useful members of the society, lends itself to this task. As a subject that deals with man and his fellow man, and man and his physical and social environment, its subject matter is drawn from various Social Sciences such as Political Science, Geography, Economics, Commerce, Sociology, Anthropology and History.

In order to make the subject achieve its objectives and maintain its relevance in the changing society, it is imperative that improvement should be made in its curriculum and its teaching. Curriculum planning is a continuous process. The continuity is necessary for Social Studies to enable the subject meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and create room for the inclusion of current issues that arise in the society into the curriculum. Take for instance environmental problems such as ozone depletion, gas flaring, waste management, desert encroachment, erosion etc. Finding solutions to these problems are challenges. HIV Aids pandemic is another problem ravaging the society and some of the challenges posed by this problem include finding a cure for the disease, prevention of its spread, getting the retroviral drugs to the reach of infected people, eradication of stigmatization etc. Information Communication Technology (ICT) awareness is also a current issue which should not be over looked.

The needs and interests of the society now become how to find solution to these menacing problems. The only way is to add these problems as contents into the curriculum to be taught in schools. The inclusion of these new ideologies in the curriculum becomes an improvement in the curriculum.

The world is becoming a global village and this is made possible by the introduction of Information Communication Technology (ICT). ICT, according to Oyebola (2006), stands for diverse

sets of technological tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store and manage information. Nicole (2001) in Okafor (2003) has classified ICT into three modern technologies, which has become central to contemporary society. They are:

1. Information Technology that uses computers which has become indispensable in modern societies to process data and save time.
2. Telecommunication technologies which include telephones, mobile and fixed (with fax) and broadcasting of radio and television, often through satellites.
3. Networking technologies of which the best known is internet, but which has extended to mobile phone technology.

ICT is needed in the educational sector because it has the potential for increasing access to and improving the relevance and quality of education in general and social studies in particular.

The curriculum of any educational system can only be translated and transmitted through the art of teaching. Also the curriculum can only achieve the goals of education when it is properly planned and effectively implemented i.e. when the subject matter is properly selected, organized and presented to the learner, during teaching. Improvement in the curriculum is expected to bring about improvement in the delivery system in terms of techniques, strategies, methods, availability and utility of instructional materials.

### **The Need to Improve the Curriculum and Teaching of Social Studies in Nigerian Schools.**

Oyebola, (2006) is of the opinion that the overall status of Social Studies in Nigerian schools still needs improvement. The curriculum of Social Studies is more of theories than practice and experience. Its narrow specialization - orientation and training is dependent on white-collar job. This type of curriculum does not prepare students for the 21st century, which is characterized by rapid change, increasing diversity and global interdependence.

The subject is sometimes taught by teachers who are not qualified to teach its content or who misinterpret them. Sometimes they confine instruction to mere recall of facts from History, Geography, and Economics etc. This is basically because some of the teachers of social studies are specialists just in one of the Social Sciences or the other.

**The State of Instructional Materials Utilized:** Instructional materials according to Onyemerekeya (2005) refer to teaching materials or devices that assist a teacher to transmit to a learner, facts, skills, attitudes and knowledge that aid the understanding and application of concepts. Observation shows that instructional materials are in short supply and sometimes not available. Where they are available, they are in bad conditions due to overuse. Another ugly trend is the teacher's inability to improvise instructional materials for use in the class.

**Need to Relate in-School Education to Out of School Realities:** Some school-leavers remain unemployed today because what they learn in school, in many cases, does not relate to life outside school or industry. The content of any curriculum must therefore consider the realities of the environment. Some problems such as drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and environmental problems, that have bedeviled our country should be integrated into the curriculum so that the learner gains awareness that will enable him play his part in solving such societal problems.

**The Need for Process-oriented Curricular:** The present curricular of Social Studies are still moribund with stereotyped teaching methods which emphasize information learning rather than discovery, problem solving, data analysis and related scientific activities. Textbook learning, teacher-

telling and factual achievements tests with emphasis placed on the mastery of information are still the practices found in many classrooms. The complex nature of today's society does not demand for such, rather, it needs to develop understandings, motor skills, process (mental skills) and affective traits together with necessary attitudes, interests and appreciation to utilize the growing technology.

New content, methods instructional materials should be introduced into the curriculum from time to time. Therefore, the teacher who will translate and transmit the innovations must be properly equipped with the professional know how. This will be done through, seminars, workshops and conferences.

### **The Role of ICT in Improving the Curriculum and Teaching of Social Studies.**

In this age of information explosion and globalization, Social Studies should be taught by means of modern and sophisticated media in order to cope with the most recent development from research findings. The use of ICT facilities comes handy here. They include:

**The Computer:** This is an electronic information processing device that can receive a set of instructions and then carry out this instruction by manipulating other forms of information at high speed. (Onyebola, 2006). Computers are used in most aspects of modern living, such as in government activities, commerce, industry, science, communication, engineering, medicine, research, education and learning. It also enables pupils store and retrieve information at will.

**The Internet:** Oni and Okere (2008) described the Internet as an instructional source, which ensures authenticity and recency in every field of endeavour. The Internet goes a long way to up-date both the teacher's knowledge and that of the learners. The Internet provides the needed information to students involved in one research or the other on - line. This web-based information can be assessed through various web sites including World Wide Web (WWW).

**Electronic Format (E-form):** Various information materials are now available in electronic format. This now reduces many study materials that used to be in giant sizes and many volumes in size. In this, form there is increased teacher-learner and learner-learner interactions. Also, the capability to explore and to perform various activities recommended at the end of each unit in Social Studies curriculum is ensured.

**The Electronic Whiteboard:** The electronic white board according to Okafor (2003) is computer-controlled device which is very effective for teaching and learning social studies. It has various components namely electronic pens, projector, eraser and a notebook. The buttons on the notebook appears as soon as the whiteboard is connected to the computer. Information written on the board can be saved or printed by the computer. The teacher of Social Studies can exploit this in teaching, blackboard summary, and assignment and in taking notes during practical lessons.

**Video Conferencing:** Okafor (2003) further described video conferencing as a means of linking up two or more remote computers, each having small camera attached. By this arrangement, participants are able to see, talk with and send documents to each other. In Social Studies, this offers learners the opportunity to exchange ideas with their classmates around the globe. This is also very useful for group activities and quiz.

**Video and Audio Cassettes:** Through this, a teacher can record his lessons in video and audio cassettes and by so doing provide packages, which the learners will use as study materials at home.

**Mobile Phone:** The mobile phone has in-built and temporary memory that helps to store, process and access information. The teacher can exploit this in giving assignments as well as providing games for the teaching of Social Studies concepts.

**Web-based Lessons:** This is another ICT resource and application, which can enhance teaching and learning of Social Studies. It involves assessing information from software's designed for web lessons. Oni and Okeke (2008) explained that web-based lesson is an inquiry oriented activity in which most or all the information used by learners are drawn from the web. It is designed in such a way that it supports learners thinking at the levels of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. A higher level application of this model helps students develop their own web quest activities to support the subject matter they are studying and share the web-quests with their peers.

### **Challenges of Effective Use of Use of ICT in Improving the Curriculum and Teaching of Social Studies.**

Despite the immeasurable benefits derivable from the use of modern information devices, a number of challenges hamper their uses in improving the teaching and learning process. Some of these challenges as outlined include:

**Cost:** These electronic devices such as computers and electronic white boards are very expensive to procure for every learner. Even when they are provided, cost of maintenance and availability of maintenance engineers tends to dampen people's interest to own them.

**Insufficient Supply:** As a result of the high cost and other reasons including ignorance and lack of interest, these gadgets are in short supply in our schools and in some cases, they are not available at all.

**Infrastructure:** These ICT devices cannot be operated without electricity. Therefore the level of electricity supply in the country hampers the effective utilization of these devices.

**Non compliant ICT teachers and learners:** Many Social Studies teachers don't possess enough skill in the use of these ICT devices. Even those who acquired the skills are gradually losing the knowledge because the devices are not available for them to practice. On the part of the learners, they are yet to have the skills required to operate these devices.

### **Recommendations**

The reason for inclusion of computer education in the school curriculum is to ensure that through its implementation, learners at all levels of education gain computer literacy. This will not be achieved if the teachers whose responsibilities it is to implement this curriculum are not computer literate. On this basis, Oyebola (2006) suggests the following strategies:

1. Government should organize computer-training programmes for primary school Social Studies teachers.
2. Government should provide computers, computer laboratories and internet connectivity in the schools.

- 3 On the other hand, teachers should not wait for government or schools to sponsor them for computer training rather they should make effort to acquire this training even if it requires their paying for them.
- 4 The federal government through the universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) should work out modalities for providing the necessary infrastructures and equipment's required for implementation of computer education curriculum in all Nigerian schools.
5. The general computer departments at Colleges of Education should be equipped with necessary ICT facilities, which will have in-built practical section that will ensure the systematic training in ICT skills.
6. There is need also to formulate a policy that will informal and life long learning through ICT based resources

### **Conclusion**

We are living in a changing society and as such, the curriculum and teaching of Social Studies should not be static but dynamic. Against this backdrop, it is necessary to improve, innovate and reform the curriculum and teaching of Social Studies to reflect the current values, norm attitudes and competencies of the society. ICT, which is the most potent force that is shaping the 21st century globalization processes, comes handy in effecting these desirable improvements in the curriculum and teaching of Social Studies. This initiative should be supported by all and sundry.

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