

## RE-ENGINEERING SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND SELF PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

School programmes are generally designed to help nations meet the needs and aspirations of its citizens. The teaching and learning of Social Studies should be both learner and society-centred. The social Studies curriculum is to help learners and society adjust to meet the challenges of the global environment. This paper examines the conceptual framework of curriculum, the need to re-engineer the Social Studies curriculum for employment and self-productivity in Nigeria. It highlights the concept and objective of social study education as well as, the concepts of youth. Also, re-engineering Social Studies curriculum is focused with recommendations and conclusion made on how to improve the curriculum to enhance employment and self-productivity in Nigeria.

The curriculum of an educational institution according to Ogunyemi, (2006) is the totality of facilities for learning which are provided by the school. These facilities include the formal teaching facilities and the “co-curricular” activities. The methods employed in providing these curricular facilities are also very important because they are vital to achieving the educational aims of a country. Therefore, every country should not only pay attention to curriculum of teacher education but also the methods of teacher preparation. The curriculum is the operational medium that enables the school to fulfil the various expectations of society. It is planned and unplanned learning experiences in or outside the school for which the school accepts responsibility. The curriculum gives direction and guidance to all activities carried out in the

educational system. Today, more than ever before, society seeks accountability from the educational system. This is not unconnected with the process of re-engineering which is turning the entire universe into a global village. Re-engineering has manifested itself in every sphere of life and in relationships among nations irrespective of their location on earth or boundaries that lie between them. Thus, human living is being played out in the globe as a single entity. This process has been enhanced with the advancement in communication and technology. Nigeria is a part of the global family and is often referred to as the Giant of Africa. As a nation, she has endorsed education as an instrument “par excellence” for effective national growth and development. Social Studies is a core subject taught at the junior secondary school to achieve the goals of education. As a subject area, it uses its curriculum to build individuals who are capable of making informed and rational decisions for the common good of a culturally inter-dependent world.

### **The Concept and Objectives of Social Studies Education**

A very careful look at the analysis of the meaning of social studies education it simply means that Social Studies education has been defined in various ways. Barth & Shermis (1977) and Onyabe (1978) defined social studies as a field of study that deals with the integration of knowledge, experience and effective use of resources for the purpose of citizenship education. Udoh (1993) viewed social studies education as an integrative field of study which probes man’s symbiotic

relationships with his environments, endow man with the reflective or contemplative capacities, intellectual, affective, social and work skills to enable him understand his world and its problems and to rationally solve or cope with them living in the society.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1994), the largest professional association for social studies educators in the world, defines social studies as:

*... the integrated study of social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school programme, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such discipline as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law.... The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.*

Viewed from modern perspective, Ogunyemi (2006) submitted that social studies is the study of the dynamic interactions people have with themselves and the elements of their environments. With these definitions, social studies could be seen as a discipline dealing with the study of human behaviour and human institutions which aim at helping the people understand the cultural values of the society in which they live. It is a problem-solving discipline in a multicultural society as it is used in making informed and reasoned decisions for progress and development in the society.

Even though there may be no consensus as regards the definition of social studies, the goals and objectives of social studies are similar. Fadeiye (1981) and Ajiboye (1999) identify among others the following as objectives of social studies.

- It helps to ensure the acquisition of the relevant body of knowledge and information with essential prerequisite to personal development as well as to a positive contribution to the betterment of mankind.
- It helps to develop in students positive attitudes of togetherness, comradeship and towards a healthy nation, the inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness and justice at work and play as one's contribution to the development of the nation.
- It helps to correct or eradicate bad social behaviours, which are very common in our society today.
- It helps learners to be alive to civic duties, which make the society to be more enjoyable and pleasant.

However, for better understanding of these objectives, Mansaray (1991) has earlier grouped them under three broad categories thus:

1. **Knowledge:** Understanding the evolving, social and physical environment, acquiring basic facts and information about our environment.
2. **Skills:** Acquiring such basic skills as wealth creation, listening, speaking, reading and writing, skills of observations, data collection, analysis and inference, which are essential to the forming of sound judgment.
3. **Attitudes and Values:** Development of positive attitudes of togetherness, comradeship and cooperation, the inculcation of values of honesty, hard work, fairness and justice.

A critical analysis of these three categories will justify the strength possessed by the subject in human development and attainment of national goals on education as probably no other single subject on the school – curriculum has the potentiality of bringing

about a high quality (character) education, the understanding, tolerance, appreciation of various cultures and subcultures of component groups in Nigeria as social studies (Chukwu, 2013).

### **The Concept of Youth**

Youth: The concept that represents youth is devoid of unanimous definition among social scientists and analysts. Biologically, youth is the quality of being young, youthfulness and juvenility. It is that aspect of one's existence that succeeds the childhood stage but precedes the adult age. Apart from the biological perspectives, other allusions to the youth concept borders commonly on agreed aspects as rate of dependency on parents, physical development, behavioural tendencies and age categorizations. For this paper, we are adopting the age to distinguish the concept of a youth, as a result of the fact that, this age variable is more commonly accepted across countries. In line with this, the maximum age limit for a youth is pegged at the age of 30 years as reflected in the National Youth Service scheme. In Nigeria, cultural parlance, the concept of youth is devoid of chronological age limits. In terms of the implication of the age limit on youth unemployment phenomenon, it is instructive to emphasize that it affects the comparability of youth unemployment statistic across Nigeria.

Unemployment according to Nuhu (2006) is an unacceptable idleness of a person willing to work at prevailing labour payment system but still unable to find one. For the international Labour Organization (2010) the issue of unemployment borders on the fact that a country's population consist of the economically active and inactive component. The economically active population is those of working age group either working or seeking for paid workers. It is in this regards that Udoh, (1993) regards the employed as those individuals of 15 years and above that are

- without a job of any type

- Available to start work in the next two weeks if offered employment but not seeking for one
- Actively looking for work or have found one and is waiting to start it.

In recognition of the devastating aftermaths of this unrelenting unemployment generally, various levels of government in Nigeria have initiated multitudinous policies and programmes targeted at the reduction of the phenomenon of unemployment in the country. Some of these programmes and policies are the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) established in 1986, the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 educational policy, the better life Programme for Rural Women, and the Family Support Programme, the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) etc.

Regrettably, in spite of the implementation of some of these laudable programmes in Nigeria, it is disheartening to state that these catastrophic phenomenon have continued unabated. Rather than youth unemployment reduction there is surge in the levels and varieties of this social malaise. It is against the foregoing problems that this paper intends to explore the issue of reducing youth unemployment through the use of social studies instrument and entrepreneurship education by providing vocational training centres that will be established at each local Government headquarters, which will promote gainful employment for sustainable self-employment (Chukwu 2013).

### **Social Studies Curriculum**

Though the term "curriculum" has come to be intimately associated to education, it is imperative to start from the onset that for any educational programme to meet the need of its citizens it must adequately reflect the need and aspirations of the current Nigerian social and

democratic order, that curriculum must do more than chronicling some sets of facts, concept and information as its content and learning experiences (Akinlaye, 1988).

Therefore, any social studies curriculum must be evolved on the belief that social studies education should positively influence, and modify the learner's behaviour in the direction of acceptable and current socio-political and cultural order. The social studies curriculum must emphasize the "*psycho motor domain*" in order to engage pupils directly and actively in the learning process, 'through appropriate and relevant classroom learning activities. Its content and learning experience should be derived from man's interminable interactions including his encounter with other men in and outside his immediate environment, his encounter with social groups, institutions and organization. The social studies curriculum must be structured to focus on, and oriented towards acquisition of problem solving skills, by the learners.

The curriculum document emphasizes the inter-disciplinary and problems oriented nature of Social Studies as it reflects economic, socio-cultural, political, scientific and technological issues and problems. The arrangement of curriculum material is designed to facilitate the instructional process to achieve national goals and objectives. However, certain structural defects have been detected in the curriculum material. Some of its component parts lack coherence and internal consistency (Ololobu, 1994). In addition, Mezieobi (1993) noted with concern inadequate evaluation of the curriculum material making it almost totally irrelevant to the needs and aspirations of learners and the society. Furthermore, inadequate monitoring and supervision of the social study curriculum coupled with government ineptitude in the implementation of the programme has almost made nonsense of Social Studies teaching.

The area that has caused greatest concern to several Social Studies scholars like

Mezieobi (1993), Ololobu (1994), Okam (2002) is the classroom malfunctioning of Social Studies curriculum. This is largely due to the mode of implementation adopted by teachers. As is evident in the curriculum document and effort of teachers teaching the subject, statement of objective is tilted in favour of the cognitive domain to the near total neglect of the psycho-motor and affective domains, (Ololobu, 1994 & Okam, 2002). Over 80% of objectives planned and taught are cognitive objectives. More painful is the fact that even the cognitive objectives, reflect the low level of simple recall.

In the teaching of the planned integrated content, simple facts are emphasized in place of concepts and generalizations. These are taught using the didactic approach instead of the recommended inquiry approach that will lead learners to think critically. In a study on teaching approaches adopted by Social Studies teachers, Nuhu (2006) revealed that over 70% of teachers do not use the inquiry approach. The teachers simply gave laborious notes to students to write which is reproduced during examinations. This had led Social Studies to be referred to as a dull, boring and unchallenging subject.

This approach to instruction has had a spill-over effect on the mode of evaluation of teaching and learning. Teachers are rarely evaluated and are also not interested in carrying out self-evaluation to improve their effectiveness (Mezieobi, 1993 & Ololobu, 1994). In the evaluation of learning outcomes, only test is used by the teachers and the questions asked not only require low level of cognitive functioning but lack content validity (Tita, 1991, Okam, 2002 and Kadiri, 2008). This situation is also reflected in the Junior Secondary Certificate Examination (JSCE) questions and result.

Analysis by Okam (2002) and Kadiri (2008) of the SSCE questions and result show

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that learners displayed ignorance and lack of mastery of content areas in Social Studies. This is in spite of the fact that questions used did not focus the current realities or reflect any appreciable relevance for young people tasked with the responsibility of nation building. The handling of the Social Studies curriculum in this manner has caused lots of problems, preventing the realization of stated goals.

The over-all personality of Social Studies teachers has not helped the situation. The bulk of such teachers are untrained and in several cases social science teachers who lack understanding of the philosophy and concept of Social Studies (Mezieobi, 1993 & Nuhu, 2006). The teachers are also lazy and complacent as they make no effort at professional growth and development. The Social Studies curriculum in its present state is non-functional. That is why steps need to be taken to redress the situation.

#### **Re-Engineering the Social Studies Curriculum for Youth Employment and Self Productivity in Nigeria.**

UNESCO (1963) considered national development to mean growth plus change that involves material advancement, mentally, psychologically, physically and organizationally. This implies that national development means increase and improvements in the way things are done in society to enhance the welfare of the citizenry. It is in this light that Okobiah (1984) stated that national development is the process of economic, political and social change in a positive direction towards a better social well-being for the members of the society. It further means a transformation, reorganization and re-orientation of all facets of society to cause improvement in the quality of life of the people. Development is people-oriented as education is people-centred. Education can only impact on development where curricular offerings are structured and organized for effectiveness. Social Studies curriculum is designed to create good

citizens that will work to transform society for the better. As values, Akinlaye (1988) Social Studies is not only concerned with knowledge but with attitudes, values, loyalty obedience and service to the nation. This is why the curriculum emphasizes all the educational domains especially the psycho motor domain.

Furthermore, a primary characteristic of Social Studies curriculum is the focus on problems. Learners are encouraged to investigate the problems of man as he interacts with the environment. Through reflective inquiry, Social Studies curriculum direct learners to identify analyse and seek rational solutions to the problems of man. Man all over the globe is caught in a wide array of problems that require the daily making of choices among competing alternatives. The Social Studies curriculum content prepares the mind of the learners in the understanding of the world around them. As noted by Yunusa (2005) Social Studies as a subject area is so flexible to accommodate any current issue at any point in time and anywhere. Since the world being turned into a vast community, Social Studies should be infused into its curriculum contemporary public issues to prepare learners to meet global challenges. Balkie (2002) noted that the most intractable problem be-devilling education in

Africa as a whole and Nigeria in particular is the problem of relevance and the unemployment of the educated. This is attributed to the examination and certificate oriented educational system. Social Studies curriculum is directed at good citizenship. Learners are trained to adapt to the social realities of their world to make meaningful contributions to the progress of the nation. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on skill acquisition and respect for the worth and dignity of the individual which are all essential for self-reliance. This is to check the shortage of skilled manpower for production and

development which may adversely retard economic growth and development and hence re-engineering relevance. The Social Studies curriculum was designed to devise comprehensive and systematic schemes and instruments for collecting valid and reliable data on the growth and progress of the programme and the learners. This is by the use of both formal and informal evaluation techniques with emphasis on performance tasks. Although, the Social Studies curriculum was designed to accomplish all the above, the defects earlier stated have prevented the full benefits to be realized. Since investing in people provides the finest foundation for lasting development, attention is called to the need to re-engineer the Social Studies curriculum to enhance national growth and development.

### **Conclusion**

There is no gainsaying the fact that development of the individual remains the most potent channel to develop the society. Thus, social studies were introduced into our school curriculum in order to help in the production of responsible citizens through the inculcation of desirable attitudes and appropriate values for youth employment. This is because when citizens are able to address persistent issues, promote civic ideals and practices, and improve upon our democratic values meaningfully and engage in productive economic activities, certainly the national development efforts will be brought to a meaningful reality. This is why this paper emphasizes the grooming of right citizens for the future as a duty duly claimed by social studies education because it is a nation building discipline. Finally, the paper advocates for the use of social studies in achieving youth employment, as it promote civic competence, knowledge, skills and attitudes required of students to assume the status of responsible citizens in the society.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made which include.

- Social studies curriculum should be organized to reflect the demands of contemporary times by being open ended and dynamic in nature to incorporate and synthesis all relevant topics so as to be able to achieve the laudable objectives of education in general and those of the social studies in particular.
- A multicultural nation like Nigeria is a country blessed with many ethnic groups of different cultures, social studies should be an important subject which every learner is expected to have basic knowledge of, in order to understand and appreciate the culture of the various other ethnic groups.
- Through social studies, emphasis should be placed in inculcating certain indispensable virtues, which help the individual have the right attitude to life. Such vital virtues are, civility, tolerance, courage, self – discipline, appreciation, respect, patriotism, endurance, sympathy, self – reliance, honesty, obedience, kindness and industry – the qualities that will characterize a free, just and egalitarian society for national development.
- Social studies should serve as an ideological orientation to enable the students to think independently, weigh evidence, and evaluate facts and ideas critically to form prudent Judgments and make decisions thus, providing a platform for the goals of education to be achieved for sustainable national development.

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