

# SKILL ACQUISITION IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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## Abstract

Social studies is concerned with the development of those skills, values and attitudes which enable the individual to be useful member of his society. The paper highlights certain circumstances under which social studies might be expected to contribute its fair share in the inculcation of the fundamental of citizenship education and skills acquisition. Also problems of social studies the role of the professional social studies teachers implications of citizenship skill acquisition for social studies teachers, conclusion and recommendations

## Introduction

Social studies as a discipline first appeared in America, it was first used in 1926 when geography and history teachers felt dissatisfied with the objectives and method of their subject. Also the need for human understanding was greater in the United States, which comprised a heterogeneous conglomeration of races and nationalities from various parts of the World. American system of education responds to life and problems of the people as a result of thought given to social studies in their school curriculum.

The story of social studies coming onto Africa by way of London Oxford conference of 1968 which planted the African social studies programme (ASSP) is all well known to many of us. The outcome of the conference led people to advocate an integrated approach to learning about the child which would provide him, active experience, involve him in his society. After the conference the concept of social studies was transmitted to many African countries, but was given different names in different countries.

The history of the origin of social studies in Nigeria cannot be complete without mention of the Comprehensive High School Aiyetoro, Obiadi (1980). There have been calls for the needs to make education more relevant to the needs of the individuals and the need to use education for national integration. Hence, social studies being a corrective study was introduced

In other to get the subject firmly established, conferences, seminars and workshops had been convened during which papers were presented and discussed on the meaning and objectives nature and scope of social. Among such conferences, workshops and seminars where;

- 1 The National Curriculum Conference in (1969).
- 2 The National Primary Education Curriculum Workshop (1971).
- 3 The teacher Education Curriculum Workshop (1971).
- 4 The secondary Education Curriculum Workshop (1973).
- 5 The Seminar on National Policy on Education (1973).

The major ideas and philosophy behind the introduction of social studies as a subject in our Nigeria school curriculum are: (a). The need to make education more

relevant to the need of individuals and societies,

(b) The need to use education for national integration, social and economic development.

(c) The need to develop the right social values.

(d) The need to make an individual responsive to the society in which he lives.

Series of definitions of social studies have been advanced by educationist but due to the complex nature of its content, different social studies educators have attempted to define social studies differently

Dubey et al (1980) defines social studies as "as the investigation of human society. It studies man at work, at worship, in politics at play in the village, in the nation everywhere in the engage in his busy programme of living". They say social is particularly interested in man's problems and encourages him/her to try to help him solve them. Social studies enable you and the children to participate in the decision making process of resolving real social issues of great important to lives.

Social studies is a process of education which utilises the study of his man life for the purpose of giving children the skills, opportunity to practice of solving problems of crucial importance but for the individual and the society.

It is the hope of social studies that the knowledge, attitude and skills obtained in the process of study we have transfer of values to the lives of children so that the decision they make as mature citizens will be useful to the Nigerian society Dubey et al (1980).

Social are identified as those studies which bare concerned with how people build a better life for themselves and their fellow men, how people deal with the problems of living together, how people are changed by the environment. To this effect therefore, if this new subjects has to capture interest of the learners, the necessary conditions favourable for its handling must be available. The teaching of social studies in schools must ensure a system that could reflect the interest of both the studies and the teachers better teaching/learning outcome.

According to Kissock (1981) social; studies is a programme of study which a society uses to install a student the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions it considers important concerning the relationships human beings have with each other, their world and themselves.

### **Problems of Social Studies**

The teaching of social studies as a subject is very important because of what it seeks to impact into the learners both young and old in the society which include:

- (a) To build up patriotic and autonomous citizens.
- (b) To develop in the child to adapt and adjust to his changing environment.
- (c) To inculcate the spirit of unity in diversity, interdependence and cooperation of all members of the local community as well as of national and international communities.
- (d) To promote the appreciation of our culture and our culture heritage.
- (e) To involve the child deeply in the life and problems of the community

If the teaching is not carefully studied, its goals and objectives cannot be achieved. Many factors affect the teaching of social studies which includes:

- (a) Acute shortage of teachers both in quantity and quality.
- (b) General inadequacy in educational financing
- (c) Inadequate supervision of schools.
- (d) Educational policies are often hasty and unarticulated.

Other problems affecting the success of the teaching of social studies or skills acquisition can be internal or external and can be generally lack of interest in the teaching and learning of the subject by the teacher and students respectively. It is believed that social study, as a subject is a dynamic programme because of its change with the time as the need of the society changes. As a

result of change in society any that is employed in relation to teaching and learning of social studies should be adoptable to change and these include the teachers, student attitude towards the subject, the teachers' method of instruction, the syllabus etc.

Yawa (1989), indicated that relatively few teachers of social studies in Nigeria are real specialist either by training of personal inclination. Even in schools where there are qualified Social Studies Teachers, problems still exist in one way nor the other. There are also only very few text books which satisfied the needs of students and teachers. As a result, students as well as teacher find it very difficult to go on smooth with the subject for lack of textbooks.

Man by nature is resistant to change. According to Nicole Machialvelli, there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things, because the innovator has four enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions and lukewarm defender in those who may do well under the new.

This statement to a great extent is true of social studies in Nigeria. Its introduction has been and is being resisted in some part of the country. Despite persistent calls by the Federal Ministry of Education and the Nigeria Educational Council in all states of Federation to introduce social studies in their Teachers Colleges and Secondary schools, some have remained adamant.

Thus, Banks and Cleggy (1977) are convinced that classroom dispensation of social studies may not only lay solid foundations for a perpetuation of democratic principles and just society but may also positively influence the fashioning out of youths, students and citizens alike who are acutely aware of the characteristic of democracy and committed to its ideals. In purely Nigerian circles, Okobiah (1985) also

observes that the main philosophy behind the birth of social studies in the country during 1960s is aimed at a mobilization of the young students and young learners for the purpose of helping them cultivate an awareness and understanding that would transform them into citizen with skills, attitudes, competencies, moral values and reasoned judgement to effectively live, interact, interrelates and contribute positively to the economic, social, political development of the Nigerian society.

### **The Citizenship Role of Social Studies in Nigeria: Some Problems Including Associated Research Findings**

One of the problem confronting Nigeria as a democracy relates to the issue of achieving a greater measure of unity amongst the various national groups that constitute her society. As a political entity, Nigerian has brought together divergently an ethnically different nation. These nations whether major or minor in their varying degrees of success or failure have constituted one centrifugal force or another within this single policy. This political unhealthiest constitutes a divisive force of great magnitude in terms of the corporate existence of Nigeria. For example there are barriers between groups and classes within the Nigeria society as a result of birth, occupation, language, race and religion: There are barriers between, between townsmen and country men, between the schooled and unschooled (Corbin et al 1983). Consequently, Nigeria is faced with a the task of breaking down there barriers and increasing the opportunities for individuals or groups to be aware and acquire their rights as citizens so as to be enabled to benefit from the social opportunities which may be available to them.

While the foregoing consideration was largely instrumental for the introduction and teaching of social studies in all Nigeria Secondary Schools and teachers Training Colleges, the National Policy on Education

stresses that an acquisition of citizenship norms and values by the young learner school not be chance affair. These have to be learnt and cultivated by way of classroom instructions in the social studies. The policy endorses the need for social studies education to be geared towards equipping the individual with the necessary where with all for cultivating civil responsibility. Indeed, the main philosophy behind the teaching and learning of social studies in schools and colleges is to measured in terms up its positive contributions at mobilizing and enabling learners to cultivate awareness and wider standing that would transform them into citizens with skills and values, attitudes, interest and rights that are compatible with the fundamental principles of democracy (Okobia, 1985).

Although the national on education has accepted social studies as a vehicle for inculcating the norms and rights associated with active citizenship amongst learners, some of the empirical studies carried in this direction have demonstrated that we are yet to achieve this goal. The results of these studies are considered in three dimensions in terms of social studies as a curriculum package, namely. (a) The content areas (b) Teaching methodologies and (c) Evaluative procedures.

With regard to the problem of content areas of social studies, Fafunwa (1974) criticize the faulty classroom emphasis in the subject which are not related to the societal needs of Nigeria as a young democracy. He reviewed that the prevailing traditional approach to pedagogy in social studies in the African settings largely educated the learner out of context in relation to the environment in which he/she is to function as a citizen. He/she deployed the existing pedagogical styles in social studies, which are not characterized by a clear definition of goals, philosophical rationale, concept and skills, which are derived from social studies.

Adejumobi's (1979) opinion survey demonstrated that instructions in the social studies in schools and colleges have suffered not only because of . the general unsatisfactory training of teachers as demanded in the epistemology and or content areas of this curriculum package but also because of the insufficiency of pre-training and in service training of teachers and a manifestation of inadequate supply of teaching aids including books which characterized many of our institution of learning: The condemned the traditional methods of training to which prospective teachers of social studies were exposed.

Obemeata (1983) criticised classroom trend in social studies, which emphasise achievements and acquisition of objectives, associated with the cognitive domain while the 'Affective and psychomotor domains' are neglected. In other words, he challenged the present classroom practice which gives prominence to knowledge and information acquisition while an achievement of important objectives which relate to a mastery in social skills, social values and desirable attitudes and behaviour are not considered seriously.

Adeyoyin (1977) contended that the classroom dispensation of social studies amongst students has not sufficiency 'Nigranised' them into becoming effective and productive individuals or citizens within the context of Nigeria as a democracy. She maintained that this development has not only failed to ameliorate ethnocentrism amongst learners but also has not stimulated in them awareness, about the importance of developing a sense of locality to the nation. She endorsed among others that it is only when pedagogy in social studies is seriously geared towards enabling learners becomes committed to democratic ideals and virtues can it be deemed to be contributing effectively its own quota in the sphere of human growth and development.

Agoola (1985) and Okam (1988) confirms that the teaching and learning of social studies in both our primary and post primary institutions have done little to encourage a development among learners, a positive social orientation to norms indispensable to citizenship education. They argued that if the national policy on education regards social studies as vehicle for entrenching the tenets of democracy and citizenship education in the minds of learners in the Nigerian society, then at schools and colleges have failed in this enterprise.

With regard to teaching methods, D.U Bey and Barth (1980) demonstrated that in spite of the popularity of social studies in Nigerian schools and colleges the following curriculum processes and practices which are built into instruction in the subject areas have largely been relegated to the background in many classrooms, namely methodology of decision making devices and principles including critical thinking and problem solving. They also condemned that of associating instructions in the social studies with what they branded ritualism and word magic and which are not related to the educational goals and daily practices in Nigeria, at least as reflected in the national policy on education.

In the area of evaluation Uche. (1980), Obemeata (1983) and Okobia (1985) recognised that although the national policy on education has given a pride of place in our schools and colleges to the curriculum potentialities of social studies education in its concern for inculcating the right types of virtues in the learner through unified and interdisciplinary studies of man, they lamented that evaluation in this curricular area largely focused on a determination or measurement of the extent to which students retained factual materials or memorised someone class. In other words, they reviewed a general lack of any systematic effort on the part of teachers to collect evidence of a student's

progress in both in the affective and psychomotor objectives rather than the traditional effort at evaluating cognitive achievements. They also deployed circumstances in which evaluation in social studies is equated to that which obtains in the traditional subjects such as geography, history and economics.

On a general note, the findings associated with the empirical studies reflected above underscored the unsatisfactory status of social studies education in Nigeria schools and colleges. To the extent that the teaching and learning of social studies in these institutions has largely failed to supply learners with the conditioning elements, forces and ideas of the modern world in which life must be believed as an inalienable right, the subject area has also failed to prepare youth and students for citizenship responsibilities within a young democracy such as Nigeria.

#### **Implication of Citizenship Skill Acquisition for Social Studies Teachers**

What may be gleaned from the various studies considered in this paper in respect of Nigeria as a young democracy is that, so far, schooling alone including the exhortation of social studies as a powerful weapon for skills acquisition for citizenship education is unlikely to alter the norms, values and attitude which an individual has learnt from the family, country and the polity itself. At the same time, Peter (1966) recognises that every school in a democratic society must consider realistically what it can do to develop democratically minded and skillful citizens. This paper strongly holds that the emergency of any meaningful arrangement in skills acquisition and citizenship education in this country that is geared to the major aim of safeguarding the right of the individual has to derive to a large extent, from a change in the political consciousness and political awareness of the policy generally. In the above circumstance this exposition holds that if the

teaching of social studies is to contribute its own quota in generating positive orientation among students for the purpose of achieving skills acquisition/effective citizenry, it must capitalise on the assets of the effective' teacher factor' factor raised earlier in this paper to bring about this. This paper underscores that whenever social studies is taught, the classroom teacher is the primary determiner of what students learn. That the teacher is the most important single factor in any caching learning many episode is endorsed by Ukeje's (1976) statement that:

Teachers are at the hub of any educational system. For upon their number, their polity, their devotion and their effectiveness depend on the success of the system and on education system can be stronger than its teachers.

The level of social studies teachers should be raised to a minimum standard of qualification and that only qualified experienced a social studies teacher should be allowed to teach in the post primary institution in other to bring success to the learners.

According to Okonkwo M (2000), concerning the teaching of social studies that social studies are identified as those studies which are concerned with how people build better life for themselves and their fellow men, how people changed and are changed by the environment. To these effective therefore, the teaching of social studies must ensure a system that could reflect the interest of both the students and the teachers for a better teaching and learning outcome. As a result of these, necessary facilities and materials of instructions are needed and these are available in every corners of the society until they are discovered out for better instructions in the schools.

It is believed that since social studies is an interdisciplinary subject so also its teaching and learning materials diverse and general and as well associated with the teaching of social studies in schools.

The social studies teacher has to male learners to accept that the possibility of learning to live in a reasonable way presupposes a development of some habits by the individual. This habits call for rule governed behaviour. Thus, the teacher has to impress upon the learners that rules are not transcendently given as part of the social other but there are reasons for them.

The social studies teacher has to close relate the subject matter of social studies to the basic needs and lives of his students and himself. In all classroom circumstances', he values attitudes and behaviours. He must assume the task of not only propagating but also improving the way of life of society whether within the classroom content or without.

One of the basic roles of the committed social studies teacher is to enable the learner acquire skills which he requires to fit not the society as a useful citizen. Thus his position has also been one, which requires him to transmit values (religions, political, cultural, moral, social, economic). The practical demonstration of the traits associated with these values and or skills by the so social studies teacher might single him as an object of identification whose desirable qualities and characteristics are to be copied, learned or imitated by the students and learners.

The fact that social studies possesses a high degree of cultural emphasis and therefore preaches the gospel that capitalises on an acquisition of relevant skills and balanced knowledge or fact about local phenomena can be exploited by the teachers to improve social climate' and 'tone' of a school.

Most importantly, the social studies teacher has to demonstrate a sound degree of professional competence and a working knowledge of the epistemology of social studies. To this end, he has to aware that the primary purpose of social studies is the utilisation of knowledge and that this objective

is aimed at improving the process by which citizens use knowledge from the social sciences and mother areas of disciplined thought (very often integratively) in making decisions concerning their individual behaviour and concerning of public policies. He has to realise that the idea is to enhance a development of the skills of analytical reasoning through the establishment or relationship that cut across the various disciplines (Engle, 1977).

The professional social studies teacher has to replace the present traditional approach to teaching and evaluation in his subject with relevant and methodologies. He has to devise more comprehensive and systematic schemes for •collecting evidence of learner's progress and growth not only in cognitive achievements but also in the affective and psychomotor areas.

In conclusion teaching and learning of social studies can be improved through the following approaches:

- (a) Social studies should be compulsory not only in junior secondary school but also in senior secondary schools.
- (b) Inter-state visits should be encouraged in this case; schools should subsidise students' escort. In this way, students can develop towards their fellow Nigerians.
- (c) Social studies teacher also has to try and visit other part of the country.
- (d) Homes should also be involved in the training programmes through public lectures, the mass media etc. This is because the child spends more time at home than at school.
- (e) Prepare some visual aids for use in teaching social studies.
- (f) Teaching gives student these how to be operating computers and browsing in the internet cafe because the world is globalizing and you can keep at back, that gives them the skills.

We shall also try to identify the specific and general problems with the view of involving suggestion and recommendation for effective instruction in teaching learning social studies

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