

# **EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN THE WORLD OF DIFFERENCE: THE AMERICAN, BRITISH AND NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVES**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper examined the Evolution of Social Studies Education in the World of Difference: (The American, British and Nigerian Perspectives). This paper contended that, the controversy about the origin of social studies has given birth to two schools of thought. This paper argued that this controversy could be attributed to the controversial nature of man which is the crux and thrust of social studies curriculum in every country of the world. To this end, this paper discussed inter alia the origin of social studies in America, Britain and Nigeria, the reasons for the infusion of social studies into Nigerian educational system, the nature, scope and objectives of social studies. This paper advocated for an African oriented social studies curriculum that would suit the needs, challenges, philosophies, ideological principles and aspirations of countries of Africa.*

The controversy about the origin of Social Studies has given birth to two schools of thought. This is because a number of Social Studies scholars such as Osho (1999), Irejefaju (1998), Osakwe and Itedjere (1993), Udoh (1989), Ezegebe (1987) ascribed the origin of Social Studies to the United States of America. In support of this assertion, Osakwe and Itedjere (1993), averred that the concept of Social Studies was first developed in the United States of America and later, the subject found its way into Europe, especially Britain. However, another school of thought led by Geoff and Gleeson (1976), Aina (1982), Urevbu (1990), Joof (1991) and Saxe (1999), are of the view that Social Studies originated in the Western world. According to Mezieobi and

Domike (1996), Saxe (1991), quips that the foundation of Social Studies education had its beginning in Great Britain after 1820s and quickly spread to the United States. Thus, the origin of Social Studies has become an academic conundrum for expert in Social Studies education. This problem can be attributed to the controversial nature of man which is the main focus of Social Studies in every country of the world.

Hadolf (1984) has advocated that environmental exigencies and societal needs are greatly responsible for the opening of new frontiers and the expansion of knowledge. For instance, the Greek Athenians who occupied the North-eastern littorals of the Mediterranean Sea became maritime and commercial in character and this gave birth to the study of marine navigation/astrology and commerce, and consequently the establishment of colonies along the Mediterranean coast and most parts the ancient wane (Osho 1999). Similarly, the emergence and development of Social Studies in America, Britain, and Nigeria can be attributed to certain experiences that are peculiar to these countries. Let us discuss these experiences that led to the evolution and development of Social Studies in the world using the above mentioned countries as paradigms.

### **The American (United States) Experience**

Social Studies started in United States of America in 1893 and was introduced into the American school curriculum in 1916. This was as a result of some American scholars who thought that controversial issues in society could not be tackled effectively by topics of the ancient and modern history (Ireyefoju 1998). The American desire for industrialization gave rise to the situation where the United States became highly engrossed in science and technology at the expense of character development of the American citizens. This scientific mentality made the United States a nation of gangsters where robbery, assassination, fraudsters, and various dimensions of crimes and assaults prevailed. Thus, there was the issue of high moral decadence in the United States at this period of American history. This is because promiscuity, drunkenness, drug abuse, drug trafficking, nepotism racism and high degree of corrupt practices are prevalent in the United States. More so, there were ample evidence that human rights, privileges and responsibilities were not being respected. This necessitated several acts of lawlessness and lack of societal and communal cordiality among the citizenry in the United States at that period of history. The American nation had become a multi-racial, multi- linguist and multinational society and there was need for a cohesive and harmonious inter-personal relationship among the citizenry. Hence: Social Studies as a cultural binding and attitudinal modifier was perceived as a ready and handy tool for the cementing together of American diversities (Osho 1998). It should be made clear that, at this period of American history, there was need to sanitize the American society with relevant knowledge, skills, competences, values, attitudes and character that were required to emancipate the nation from the cocoon of moral decadence and from the shackles of lawlessness. To this end, Social Studies was seen as the most appropriate,

relevant and required discipline that could bring about a worthwhile knowledge, skills and value orientation as well as attitudinal changes in the citizens of America. Thus, Social Studies was the panacea to the social, economic, political, cultural, educational, scientific and technological problems of the American state.

The National Education Association (NEA) and the National Council for Social Studies played significant roles in the development of Social Studies in the United States of America. The (N.E.A.) through its committee on Social Studies, recommended that Social Studies should be seen as a distinct field of study and that it should be incorporated into the educational programme of the United States of America in the year 1916. The (NCSS) was enthusiastically and pragmatically publishing Social Studies text books, handbills, journals and so on so as to educate the American citizens on the need to accept and embrace Social Studies as a sine qua non for the development of American nation.

The NCSS also organises seminars, workshops and various programmes in educational institutions to ensure that Social Studies educators, experts, students and the general public are abreast with societal issues and problems (Osho 1998). The NCSS, stated inter alia the objectives of Social Studies in the United States as follows:

- The fostering of democratic principle
- Promoting national unity among state and peoples of the United States of America.
- Educating the Americans on their rights, privileges and responsibilities.
- Inculcating nationalistic attitude and national pride, and
- Training the American to be world citizens easily adaptable and integrative in new situation globally.

Thus, the essence of Social Studies education in the United States is to prepare young people to be humane, rational, participating citizens in a world that is becoming increasingly interdependent (NCSS).

### **The British Experience**

The origin and development of Social Studies in Britain has its root in the aftermath of the first and second world wars. The immense devastations of the first and second world wars, rising unemployment, recessions and the threat of another world war led to the question about the nature and aims of schooling (Urevbu 1990). The decorum, justice, fair-play, acceptable ethical principles and religious tenacity which had hitherto been the hallmark in European States gave way to permissiveness and moral decadence (Osho 1999). Similarly, the comatose nature of the British economy and the political quagmire as well as the social menaces that followed the wars created situations where the masses became jobless, hoboos, mendicants, frustrated, mal-adjusted, intolerant and were left melancholic. Hence, there was the urgent need to re-orientate Britons with a new curriculum package so as to be good citizens of Britain and the world. This urgent need to create a better British society out of the war battered and

ravaged Britons led to the introduction of Social Studies in Britain. As a result of this understanding of the values of Social Studies in inculcating in the citizens the relevant knowledge, skills and values and attitudes, attempts were made to reform the conventional curriculum and introduce a whole variety of Social Studies with emphasis on citizenship, democracy, and contemporary social issues (Urevbu 1990). Thus, the understanding of values of Social Studies in inculcating in the citizens the relevant knowledge, skills, values, competences and attitudes required for good citizenship led to the formation of Social Studies movement in Britain in 1946. According to Windhock (1978), as reported by Osho (1999), the mandate given to the Social Studies movement in Britain in the year 1946 include:

1. The teaching and imbibing of the right kind of principles and values.
2. The exposition of the British citizens to world education by sensitizing them with global issues of concern and showing the interdependence of man.
3. To bring about a better British society committed to individual, communal, national and international development.

In other to achieve these lofty objectives, the Social Studies movement remained pertinacious and pragmatic in their crusade for the development of Social Studies in Britain by organising seminars, workshops, conferences, rallies and providing Social Studies educational materials, books, articles, journals, scholarships and financial assistance for the propagation of Social Studies in Britain. The movement also made use of electronic media to educate the British citizens on Social Studies issues of national and international interests. The movement's rhapsodies of Social Studies was among the factors that motivated the British government to extend the benefits of curriculum reforms to English speaking African countries. As a result of this, the British government sponsored a curriculum conference tagged "The Oxford Conference" in the year 1967 with the aim of identifying the needs, aspirations and priorities in curriculum development in Africa. The conference was held at Queens College Oxford, England between 10th and 16th September, 1976 with Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra- Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia in attendance.

### **The Nigerian Experience**

Social Studies as a field of study came into Nigeria via America and Britain. The origin of Social Studies as a discipline in Nigeria educational system is usually attributed to the conference of African educators held in Mombassa, Kenya from 16th to the 30th of August, 1968. The Mombassa conference was attended by American and British educators as well as other educators from Kenya, Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. On the Nigeria delegation at the Mombassa conference of 1968 were professors John Ade Ajayi, Olu Okedeji and Dr MA. Makinde. The conference advocated for African oriented education through the pragmatic teaching and learning of Social Studies. Thus, an African oriented Social Studies curriculum was accepted for adoption by all participants

to suit the individual needs, aspirations and philosophies of the participated countries (Nwalado 2007).

Social Studies was introduced into the Nigerian school system decades ago with the goal of breaking down regional, ethnic, and religious loyalties, and fostering national unity (Obebe and Olatunde). The Aiyetoro experiment of 1963 that was sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Ford foundation marked the beginning of a truly Nigerian Social Studies Education. This implies that, Aiyetoro Comprehensive High School was the first secondary school to offer Social Studies Education in Nigeria.

The 1965 conference of principals in the then Western Nigeria formed a very useful forum for propagating the message of the new Social Studies (Osakwe and Itedjere, 1993). This conference gave birth to the planning, organising and production of Social Studies text books and other relevant instructional materials.

The critique conference of Nigerian Educators of 1968 in University of Lagos, the 1969 conference held at cooperative college, Eleyele, Ibadan, the social studies seminars of 1970 in Ilorin and Jos, the social studies conference of 1971 held at Government Teacher training College, Ilesa and the social studies workshop of 1976 at Saint Andrew's College, Oyo provided impetus for the development of social studies in Nigeria.

The University of Lagos, the University of Ife, the Ahmadu bellow University, teacher's Colleges-of Bida, Bauchi, Kastina, UNNESCO UNICEF SOSAN, CESAC; NERDC, etc Spearheaded the rapid spread and development of social studies in Nigeria by organizing conferences, seminars, workshops on the need to embrace social studies as a sine qua non for building a strong, United, just, egalitarian, democratic and disciplined Nigeria (Nwalado 2007).

### **The reasons for the infusion of social studies into the Nigerian Education system**

1. The inadequacies of our educational system during the colonial period and after political impendence in 1960. The education during this period was cognitive domain based at the detriment of affective and psychomotor domain of educational objectives.
2. The education provided during the colonial era and early post colonial years was not relevant to the needs, philosophies and aspirations of Nigerians. Thus, the education during this period geared towards alienating the Nigerian citizenry from their cultural environment. This is because it produced Eurocentric Nigerians.
3. The integrated approach to learning in social studies was seen as a panacea for the disenchantment of the Nigerian citizenry with the fragmented or compartmentalized knowledge of the traditional disciplines. That is knowledge is not fragmented or compartmentalized but rather wholistic. And the child does not see the society or the world in fragments of subject disciplines, but as a whole. Hence, the integrated approach to learning in social studies tends to follows the students natural ways of learning in a wholistic manner.

4. The need for national integration and Unity reconstruction and rehabilitation as well as dismantling regional, tribal, ethnic and religious loyalties in Nigeria after the civil war.

5. The emergence of the New National Policy on Education in 1977 provided the much-needed fillip to the infusion of social studies into Nigeria schools. Social studies as a value laden discipline was elevated to the status of a core subject in the school curriculum.

6. The national curriculum conference of 1969 in Lagos further acted as a boost to social studies in Nigeria. The conference helped to advertise the teaching and learning of social studies at the primary and junior secondary school levels.

7. The Mobbasa conference of African educators held in Kenya in 1968 which advocated a pragmatic approach to the teaching and learning of social studies further acted as a boost to social studies education in Nigeria. At this conference, an African oriented social studies curriculum was accepted for adoption by all the participants to suit the individual needs, aspirations and philosophies of the participated countries.

8. Social studies was also introduced in Nigeria schools as a value laden discipline that is capable of producing balanced citizens with relevant knowledge, skills, character, attitudes, competence and values required for the social, economic, political, scientific and technological development of the Nigerian nation. Thus, social studies was introduced in Nigeria so as to produce disciplined citizens that would reposition Nigeria for greatness in terms of social, economic, political, scientific and technological development.

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

The objectives of Social Studies education are derived from the Nigerian National objectives. Hence, it is necessary to first identify these National objectives before highlighting the objectives of Social Studies Education in Nigeria. The five main national objectives of Nigeria according to National Policy on Education (2004) are the building of:

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A United, strong and self-reliant nation
4. A great and dynamic economy
5. A land of bright and full of opportunities for all citizens

The Educational system is expected to produce sound, effective and productive citizens with relevant knowledge, skills and character required for the achievement of the above stated national objectives. If the overall philosophy of Nigeria must be achieved using education as a tool, the Philosophy of Nigeria education should aim at achieving the following objectives.

1. The inculcation of National consciousness and national unity.

2. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.

3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and

4. The acquisition of the appropriate skills, abilities, and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

Social Studies is a discipline that is man and society based in that it is geared towards solving man's problems in his ever changing society. Society has demanded that education or schools should help in building complete individuals who will contribute to the overall development of the society. It is in recognition of this fact, that the objectives of social studies in Nigeria have been designed to meet the needs, aspirations, challenges and philosophies of the Nigerian society. Nigeria as an under-developed nation is beset with political, social, economic, cultural, religious, scientific and technological challenges. These challenges necessitated the need for social studies Education which is an educational sine qua non for the development of the Nigerian society. This assertion was further buttressed by Okobiah (1999) when he quipped that, social studies by understanding human relationships, aims at producing citizens with skills, competencies, moral values and reasoned judgment to effectively live, interact, interrelate and contribute positively to the economic, social, political and cultural development of the Nigerian society and the world in general.

According to Osakwe and Itedjere (1993), the objectives of Social Studies Education in Nigeria may be condensed into three broad areas, which include:

1. **Information Learning:**

This is the knowledge component of social studies. It includes the following objectives:

- The creation of awareness and an understanding of our ever changing social and physical environment. For example, the physical, social and political metamorphosis of the Nigerian environment from 1960 to date.
- The need for efficient utilization and management of our vast natural and human resources.
- The need for educating our citizens of the basic social functions that characterize all societies, such as producing, transporting, distributing and consuming of goods and services, providing for education, recreation and government.
- It also involves a study of the nation, its people and culture, the settlement, growth, history and development of Nigeria.
- Study of the neighbourhood, community, local government, state, how people live and work there, how they meet their basic needs of life, how they interact and depend on each other.
- An examination of the world of work and an orientation of various careers, basic human institutions, such as the family.

## **2. Attitudes and Values Learning**

Social Studies objectives in the areas of attitudes and values include the following:

- Knowing the common values of our societies as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the National Policy on Education.
- Developing to make decisions that involve choices between competing values.
- Developing of reasoned loyalty to our country by respecting the national anthem and national pledge.
- Knowing the basic human rights guaranteed to all citizens.
- Developing a sense of respect for the ideals, the heritages and institutions of Nigeria.
- Developing a feeling of kinship towards every human being no matter his race colour or creed.
- Developing a sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and inter dependence of all members of the local community, and of the wider national and international community.

## **3. Abilities and Skills Learning:**

Under this sub-category the following objectives fall within the ambit of social studies.

- **Social Skills:** The ability to live and work together. That is, the feeling of comradeship, it also involves discipline in public places, for example, taking turns and learning to be courteous, learning self control, sharing ideas and experiences with others, including the spirit of self-confidence.
- **Study Skills And Work Habits:** The ability to locate and gather information from books, the library, and from a variety of other resources, the ability to write sound academic reports, ability to read materials and detect bias, ability to use maps and other pictorial representations.
- **Group Work Skills:** The ability to work with others, take roles, participate in group discussions etc.
- **Intellectual Skills:** To develop a capacity to learn to acquire skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing and of calculation but also the skills of hand, together with the skills of observation, analysis and inference which are involved in scientific problem solving. The objectives of social studies may be summarized as socialization for increased social awareness, social sensitivity to socio-environmental affairs, social harmony and coexistence, positive social values perpetuation, social responsibility, reflective social problem identification and resolution- oriented decision making, socio-civic competence, constructive social criticism, social participation, and social action and valuing, application of acquired functional knowledge and skills or abilities to social setting, all for better social living (Domike and Mezieobi 1996).

### **The Nature of Social Studies**

Social studies is concerned with how man solves the problems in his environment. Societal problems are multi-dimensional, ranging from political, social, economic, cultural, religious, psychological, ideological, medical and philosophical-to scientific and technological problems. But man has to solve these problems not as a political scientist or historian or economist, but rather solves his problems as wholly integrated personality. Hence, the Nigerian nation has demanded that education and schools should help in building complete arid balanced citizens that would contribute to the overall development of the society. It is in recognition of this clarion call, that the nature of social studies is designed to meet the needs, aspirations, challenges, ideologies and philosophies of the Nigerian society. Social studies by nature is a discipline that helps people to acquire the relevant knowledge, skills and character required for personal and societal development. Thus, social studies emphasizes the importance of humans in the society. In support of this assertion, Beard in Nwalado (2009) alluded that, social studies is the creation of rich and many sided personalities equipped with practical, knowledge and inspires by ideas so that they can make their way and fulfill their mission in a changing society which is a part of a world complex. Social studies by nature is the multi disciplinary and integrative study of man's activities in his ever changing environment. That is, social studies acquires, adapts and integrates the relevant knowledge, skills and values from all disciplines in order to study man's activities in his environment (Nwalado, 2009). In social studies, we try to find out the origin of man, what man eats, his dressing mode, his settlement pattern, his economic, political, religious, social and technological activities in his environment. This view is in concord with the assertion of Obebe and Olatunde (2005), when they noted that, social studies education is learning about people, how and where they live, how they form structures and societies, how they govern themselves and provided for all their needs. Thus, social studies is a subject that gives its learners the opportunity to examine practical problems relating to their environment, seek solutions to them and apply the solution to their environment for modification (Obebe and Olatunde 2005). Nwalado (2007), contends that, social studies seek to present to the students the broadest relevant spectrum of knowledge, skills and values about man's activities in his ever changing environment as well as the strategies of survival in his environment. Social studies by nature accepts relevant knowledge, skills and values in its scope and content provided they would help the students to solve his personal and societal problems. Social studies has the potentialities of inculcating in the student the right type of knowledge, skills, virtues, good values and competencies, through a unified multi-disciplinary and integrative study of man's activities in his environment.

Instructionally, social studies focuses on the problems and issues of man in groups in his every changing environment and helps students to acquire desirable social habits, attitudes, knowledge and requisite skills in solving this problems that are ever changing. Social studies by nature, uses a wholistic approach in identifying and solving

the problems that confront man in his environment. That is, social studies integrates relevant knowledge, skills and values from all disciplines to form a whole and treats the problem of man as one and proffers a single, enduring and lasting panacea. Thus, since social studies deals with man in totality, it means it has relationships with the liberal art, the social sciences and the sciences in order to gain a pellucid understanding and wider perspective in the study of man and how he solves his environmental problems. Social studies as an integrative discipline draws its contents from scholarly disciplines of sociology, psychology, geography, political science, history, religion, anthropology, economics, philosophy, the liberal art, the science and contemporary issues in the society. Despite the relationships between social studies and social sciences, the liberal arts, and sciences, some structural differences can also be pointed out Okobiah, an astute Nigerian Professor and a social studies senior advocate of Nigeria, advocated in a social studies class that, the fundamental task of the social sciences, the liberal arts and sciences are scholarship and eventually social utility whereas the fundamental task of social studies is basically instructional and social utility. In the school system, social studies serves as a valuable resource for acquiring knowledge and providing necessary information for life, inculcating desirable social habits, attitudes and values as well as useful skills for problem solving, reading and writing skills much needed in adult life (Obebe and Olatunde 2005). What distinguishes social studies as a field of study is that, it is packaged to promote civic value, civic virtues, civic competence, civic skills and it is multi-disciplinary and integrative, incorporating relevant skills, values and knowledge from many fields of study in order to study man in totality. For example, in studying man in his environment, emerges the idea of origin of man and community (History), effect of weather on man's activities (Geography) how man lives in his community (Sociology), man's relationship with his God/gods (Religion), how man governs his community (Political Science), man's needs and wants (Economics), man's way of life (Anthropology), man tools and equipments (Science and Technology), man's perception about life (Philosophy), man's height and weight (mathematics), how man distributes his good and services (commerce), and his nature as a specie (biology). In confirming the multi-disciplinary and integrative nature of social studies, Lawton (1981), noted that social studies is a unified integrated subject which draws appropriate knowledge and experience from the social sciences and other disciplines about man and the environment for the purpose of citizenship education. This implies that, social studies in Nigeria is aimed at producing citizens with skills, competences, moral values and reasoned judgment to effectively live, interact, inter-relate, and contribute positively to the economic, social, political and cultural development of Nigerian society (Okobiah, 1984). Social studies starts its focus on man and his immediate family unit and spreads out to his community state, country and the world. Nzeribe (2000), expresses that, social studies is an investigation of human activity which studies man at home, at work, in politics, at play, in the community, nation and indeed every programme of his life.

### **The Scope of Social Studies**

The scope of social studies is very broad, extensive and encompasses a wide range of discipline. This is because the scope of social studies encompasses knowledge, skills, values, competencies, attitudes, character, virtues from the social sciences, the humanities, liberal arts and physical sciences. In support of this fact, Osakwe and Itedjere (1993), noted that, the scope of social studies covers areas of knowledge, skills, and attitudes and values, with the ultimate aim of producing people who are social civically competent. The scope of social studies covers all aspects of man's activities in the whole world. Thus, social studies is concerned with the development of the citizens with relevant knowledge, skills and attitude or character which enable them to be useful members of their society.

We must note also that, the scope of social studies is not static but dynamic. The scope of social studies is in a state of flux due to the factors of space, time and human development. Social studies as a subject that focuses on man in his environment has the ability, capacity and capability to accommodate, incorporate and integrate new ideas, experiences, information, knowledge, values, skills, development and challenges in its scope that is dynamic in nature. Commenting on the dynamic nature of the scope of social studies, Adedoyin in Mezieobi and Domike (1996), averred that, as long as man lives on the surface of the earth, there will always be added dimensions to his problems, prospects, aspirations and achievements, all of which extends the frontiers in the nature and scope of social studies as a subject. Social studies incorporates and integrates relevant knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, competence, civic virtues and concepts drawn from the social sciences, the liberal arts and the sciences blended together for instructional utility.

We should note also that, the scope of social studies varies depending on the Level and the nature of the students the teacher is guiding to learn how to acquire knowledge, skills and values in social studies teaching learning process. Hence, the presentation of content in social studies teaching-learning process follows a spiral method or pattern. The spiral nature of social studies curriculum is in accordance with the thesis of Bruner (1961), that any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development. What is required of the teacher is to identify the basic concept, generalizations and structure of the subject and present it to the learners according to their experiences, needs, interest, nature and level in a wider context. This implies that, even if the content of lower, middle and upper basic social studies curriculum are the same, the amount of details (Scope) require at this different level would vary because of the needs, interest and nature of the students involved. Thus, social studies teaching learning process proceeds from the known to the unknown, simple to complex and from complex to abstract.

### **Conclusion**

It is a truism that social studies as a field of study came into Nigeria via America and Britain. The origin of social studies has become an academic conundrum for scholars because of the controversial nature of man which is the crux of social studies curricular in every nation of the world.

In order to achieve the lofty objectives of social studies, social studies teachers and curriculum planners should remain pertinacious and pragmatic in advocating for an African oriented social studies curricular that would suit the needs, challenges, ideological principles, philosophies and aspirations of countries of Africa.

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