

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

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Abstract

School programmes are generally designed to help nations meet their needs and aspirations. School studies is both learner and society-centered. It uses its curriculum to help learners and society adjust to meet the challenges of the global environment. However, available evidence on the JSS Social Studies curriculum shows the contrary. This paper examines the conceptual framework of curriculum, the need to re-engineer the JSS Social Studies curriculum for employment and self productivity in Nigeria. It highlights the defects of the curriculum especially the neglect of the prescribed design and recommended teaching methodologies. Also, re-engineering Social Studies curriculum is focused with recommendations on how to improve the curriculum to enhance employment and self productivity in Nigeria.

The curriculum of an educational institution 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 fulfill 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 world 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 (JSS) to achieve the goals of education. As a subject area, it

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uses its curriculum to build individuals who are capable of making informed and rational decision for the common good of a culturally inter-dependent world.

Conceptual Framework of Curriculum Content

Oderinde (1998) opined that curriculum is very crucial to education. Curriculum is to education what education is to the society; the heart of the matter, the fulcrum of national development, “the inner engine which propels education to achieve for both the individual and the society what they are proud of, or what they hold up as prize. Curriculum is a word derived from a Latin notion, which means “a running course”. It could also be interpreted to imply “a run way”, a course which one competes for to reach a goal, or win a prize, a certificate or attain a career. Oderinde (1998), quoting (Ifejika 1990), went further to define curriculum as the totality of the experiences which the learner has acquired under the guidance of the school for the purpose of effecting desirable patterns of behaviour. Wheeler (1980) refers to curriculum as planned experiences offered to the learners under the guidance of the school. Saylor and Alexander (1981) presents curriculum as a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities to achieve broad educational goals and related specific objectives of an identifiable population served by a single centre.

However, disparate as the various definitions may be curriculum experts still hold a form of unity behind this seeming diversity. It is believed that before curriculum can yield expected results, it should have *input*, *interactions* and *outputs*. An input implies that curriculum is not haphazard or incidental; the school deliberately plans it, with learner and learning experiences serving as inputs. Learner represents the raw materials which one expects to process into better-finished products. The processing takes place under the guidance of teachers in the school. The curriculum contains prescriptions that are derived from societal value. Interaction occurs between the learner and learning experience under the guidance of the school and the teachers. The ‘processing’ of learners and material to produce better products takes place under the guidance of school teachers. The planned experience takes care of so many school activities and services which may be obtained in the library, health centre, sports centre, assemblies and field trip.

Concept of Social Studies

Social Studies now occupy a definitive and respectable place in the curriculum of both primary and junior secondary schools in Nigeria. The current eminence of the subject could be attributed to the realization that unlike other school subjects, Social Studies focuses primarily on the learner, the physical and social realities that surround him. Mansaray (2001), asserting a similar opinion that Social Studies is, arguably, the most integrated of all school subjects at the primary and secondary school levels. This is so because it is only by deriving and integrating its content from a variety of disciplines that Social Studies can attempt to foster this understanding. As a concept, Social Studies is that discipline that deals with the study of man in his environment. It deals with man’s interaction with his physical, social, economic, cultural, religious, scientific and

technological environment. It is concerned on one hand with the reciprocal relationship between man and his environment. It is a discipline that is concerned with the “realities” of our existence and man’s interactions with his social environment.

As a school subject that is designed to foster in learners, a better understanding of man’s interactions with his physical and social environments. (Mansaray, 1991), Social Studies can be said to have reached maturity, yet it remains perhaps the least understood and most suspected subject on the school timetable, especially by teachers of the other, more traditional subjects. The broad-based nature of Social Studies makes it the most appropriate school subject in the Nigerian school curriculum to meet many of the demands of education for a sustainable enduring and democratic future. Social Studies is the school subject contrived to foster deeper understanding in young learners of the intricacies of the realities of man’s existence and providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attributes to better cope with, and possibly influence these realities. Therefore, as a school subject, it is not only concerned with cognitive development (although this constitute an important part of the aims of the programme) but also concerned with shaping behaviour, attitude and value orientation of the pupils in the direction of what society considers as desirable for its democratic sustenance and progress. Thus, it is referred to as a way of life.

Social Studies Curriculum

Though the term “curriculum” has come to be intimately associated to education, it is imperative to state from the on set that for any educational curriculum to 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, 1996). It is the association of curriculum to education that interests all social studies educators. 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 “*affective 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 man 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 JSS Social Studies Curriculum

“Social studies” is an integrated study of man as he battles for survival in the environment. It is designed to equip man with knowledge, useful skills, positive values and actions for citizenship. Kisko (1981) described Social Studies as a programme of study which a society uses to instill in learners the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions it considers important concerning the relationships human beings have with each

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other, their world and themselves. This description marks out Social Studies as a subject deliberately utilized by nations to effectively integrate itself and its citizens into the world system upholding the universality of man. It acknowledges the intense relationships that link distant localities and the benefits that accrue from such interconnectedness. The global relationship it promotes is not that which simply down-plays differences but one which is directed at enhanced opportunities for improved standard of living and a secured future for man all over. Thus, the Social Studies curriculum is planned to reflect integrated knowledge, reflective thinking through inquiry, problem-oriented and provide balanced learning. It is expected to be implemented by professionally trained personnel who with the highest sense of responsibility, act as useful models for imitation. This discussion on the JSS Social Studies curriculum will highlight the following:

- i. The curriculum document
- ii. Implementation approaches
- iii. Personality of the teacher

The JSS Social Studies curriculum document covers the three years of junior secondary education. It is divided into five parts to reflect elements of the curriculum. Okobiah (1984) identified the distinguishing features of the curriculum. They include:

- i. The cluster of subject matter
- ii. The conceptual and spiral presentation of information
- iii. The pattern of instructional organization.

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 JSS curriculum coupled with government ineptitude in the implementation of the programme has almost made nonsense of Social Studies teaching at the JSS level.

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 at the JSS level. 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 titled 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 JSS Social Studies teachers, Nuhu (2006) revealed that over 70% of JSS 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 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 JSS 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 JSS Social Studies curriculum in its present state is non-functional. This is why steps need to be taken to redress the situation.

Re-engineering the JSS Social Studies Curriculum for 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, re-organization and re-orientation of all facets of society to cause improvement in the quality of life of the people.

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Development is people-oriented as education is people-centered. 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 affective 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 analyze 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-deviling 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 JSS Social Studies curriculum was designed to accomplish all the above, the defects earlier stated has prevented the full benefits to be realized. Since investing in people provide the finest foundation for lasting development, attention is called to the need to re-engineer the JSS Social Studies curriculum to enhance national growth and development.

Conclusion

The importance of re-engineering JSS Social Studies curriculum cannot be overstressed; no serious nation who wants to make an impact and be recognized in the country of nations can resist Social Studies education as an innovation in the school curriculum cannot afford to be cosmetic in design with little or nothing to give to learners and society. It is pointless and baseless to teach Social Studies for purely academic purposes without helping learners and society fit into the demands of the global environment. The world today seeks individuals who are intellectually stimulated, matured and who are equipped with useful and usable competencies to tackle and solve problems. The Social Studies JSS curriculum has reached a cross-road. There is an urgent need to re-engineer it to introduce changes in the positive direction. The changes must be such that provide a new set of standards and quality judged by the extent to which education fit the real needs and values of the Nigeria nation.

Recommendations

- i. There is need for a re-orientation of the entire educational system in Nigeria which has acted as a great hindrance to the smooth operation of the Social Studies curriculum. This will check the mindset of Nigerians to view quality and standards of education differently.
- ii. There is an urgent need to review the JSS Social Studies curriculum to make it more relevant.
- iii. Training and re-training of Social Studies teachers must be treated with urgency to ensure proper implementation of the curriculum.
- iv. Government also needs to give good incentives to jobs like teaching which are crucial to national growth and development. Competence and industry when noticed should be rewarded, in teachers. This will spur them to greater productivity.
- v. Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) should, during its annual national conferences organize workshops for teachers of Social Studies to uplift their knowledge and skills.
- vi. Entrepreneurial skills and activities should be incorporated into the JSS Social Studies curriculum to prepare learners for life in society.
- vii. Regular and periodic monitoring and supervision of Social Studies curriculum implementation should be embarked upon by Social Studies experts.

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