

# Curbing the Persistence Problems Facing the Effective Teaching and Learning of Social Studies in Nigerian Schools

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## Abstract

This study is aimed at curbing the persistence problems facing the effective teaching and learning of social studies in Nigerian school. The sorry state at which the subject is currently passing through in the country has been the song in many mouth and stakeholders are yet to address the problem holistically. This paper therefore stepped in to highlight some of these challenges to includes; lack of adequate textbooks, poor teacher’s qualification, absence of logical scheme of work, methodological problem, short period given to the subject, lack of instructional materials, large class size, poor attitude of both teachers and students, to mention but a few. For the teaching and learning of social studies to overcome these challenges, several recommendation were made to aggressively address these problems as a means of promoting effective teaching and learning of the subject.

**Keywords:** Teaching, learning and social studies.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Generally, education is viewed a veritable instrument that brings about socio-cultural, intellectual, political as well as economic growth in any given society or country that is progressing. This could be authenticated by the views of Cheta and Anekwe (2010). When they observed that “education is seen and assumed to be the most instrument of change, as any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be proceeded by an educational revolution. They also added that the fulfillment of this role lies on functional education and educational policies. Hence, education could be regarded as an instrument for social, economic, cultural and political development in any given society. Although the fundamental changes in the value domain of societies offer the impetus for altering educational goals. Vikoo (2019) observed that “most educational systems therefore change their (educational) goals to be more responsive to the needs of the society. At this point, it has become glaringly clear that to meet up with problems facing the effective teaching and learning of social studies, teachers should be well equipped with the needed facilities and enabling environment since he occupy the centre stage of translating policy into action

and principles into practice during classroom instruction with his learners.

Social studies as an integrated, when well taught, is capable of affording the learners the unique opportunity of becoming a well-informed citizen of the country. This view could be authenticated by the remark of Akintola, cited in Fadiye (2001) that:

*“Social studies would offer mediation and provide the needed reforms or charges in society as well as catering for its survival by removing barriers between groups and classes within societies as a result of birth, occupation, language, race and religion and even between generation and tribesmen and country men and also the schooled and the unschooled, the literate and illiterate” (p5).*

### Clarification of Terms

The need to clarify concept was succinctly made clear by Mezieobi (2014) when he was apt to observe that “clarification of terms diffuses conceptual ambiguities and confusion arising from incorrect meaning sharing and puts the communicator-communicatee on a comfortable pedestal in

understanding themselves in the ensuring discuss. In this vein, the following concepts need to be clarified in this paper. They are: Teaching, learning and social studies.

### The Term Teaching

Teaching as a concept in education has to do with some interaction between a teacher and a learner in a formal setting. In the word of Ekpo (2010), teaching process may therefore be viewed as a purposeful form of social interaction, in which teachers relate with learners in a conducive learning environment so as to get the learners do what will enable them achieve the intended learning gains. Base on the above idea, one may view teaching as a process that either direct or impart knowledge, skills attitude and behaviour to a learner in an enriched environment. Amaele in Nwadike (2022) succinctly made this point clear when he classified teaching into three acts: Logical, strategic and institutional.

### The Term Learning

Learning as a concept is linked to teaching and could not be defined without teaching. They are like two sides of a coin. To Vikoo (2003), learning could be seen as the process involved in the change in behaviour pattern or the change itself. In a related development, Ekp (2010) put it more clearly that learning is a general term for a relatively lasting change in behaviour or performance caused directly by experience, either produced incidentally or through institutional interactions from teaching. Mbagwu in Onyenemezu (2017) crown it all when he posits that learning is not compulsory but could be propelled by a number of factors which include among others, personal factors such as meeting pressing needs, to learn new things, to develop self-confidence, to upgrade job skills, for business enhancement and economic benefits.

### The Term Social Studies

Social studies are not limited to a single definition like any other social sciences or humanities, on the school curriculum. According to Obakhume cite in Birabil and Abanum (2017), social studies is the study of problems of survival in an environment and how to find solution to them for the purpose of clarification. A more comprehensive definition was given Mezieobi as reported by Birabil and Nwanko (2020) as “a formalized, correlated or integrated study of man and his environment, which imbues the learner with the cognition, skills values, attitudes, abilities and competencies that will enable him become an informed, rational, analytical, participative and functional citizens in his environment and beyond.

Edinyang and Effiong (2017) conceptualized social studies to be that field that focuses on man in his environment, the relationships and interactions between man and his environment and seeks to equip him with skills, values and attitudes needed to identify with and

the problems found in his environment to make his life worth to bother.

### The Importance of Social Studies in Nigeria

The importance of social studies as a subject can never be overemphasized. Ogunsanya, (1984), put it with precision when he reported that “the experience of many countries of the world where social studies has been introduced into the school curriculum has shown that such countries were initially motivated to do so by, the felt need to get rid of certain social vices plaguing their countries and which they believed social studies could contribute in eliminating”. In Nigeria, the subject has among other thing.

1. Promoted the much needed national unity among the over 250 ethnic groups in the country. The subjects promote unity and strengthen international understanding and cooperation among people and different countries of the world.
2. It has helped immensely in intellectual skills as well as attitude and values of both the teachers and students.
3. Social studies enable the learner to adapt to any environment he or she presides. This makes them to adapt to new situation easily and to cooperate with more member of their society. Nwanna-Nzewunwa (2003).
4. Social studies are a problem solving subject. To Fadieye (2005) enable us to solve the problems of survival in our different environments.
5. The subject helps the learner to have respect for our constitution, authority family as well as societal law and order.
6. Social studies are to be a live to our civic duties and responsibilities.
7. The subject enables us to have respect for our rich cultural heritage and positive aspect of our national life style.
8. The subject helps us to fight against social vices in the society.
9. The subject enables us to be familiar with things that happen in our environment and beyond.
10. The subject offer ample opportunity for us to be good and informed member or citizens of the society.
11. The subject integrates and presents knowledge in holistic form to the learner through interdisciplinary approach techniques.
12. Social studies offer the opportunity of understanding man’s ways of life, his basic needs and activities he or she engages in for self-survival.
13. Social studies enable us to know, locate and make adequate use of our environmental/ natural resources.

The above importance was further articulated by the Federal Government of Nigeria, in its National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014). According to section 1, unit 3 of this document, Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on the following set of beliefs.

- a. Education is an instrument for national development and social change;
- b. Education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria;
- c. Education maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self-fulfillment and general development of the society;
- d. Education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges; and
- e. Education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society (NPE, 2014).

Base on the above view, social studies education could be seen as a potent instrument, capable of facilitating the attainment of the aims and objective of education as well as producing responsible citizens that will contribute immensely towards the development of Nigeria and the world at large. In support of this, Esu and Enu, (2010) identified social studies education in an effective instrument as it possesses the potentials to achieve the five cardinal goals of education in Nigeria.

### Problems Encountered in Teaching Social Studies in Nigeria

Like any other subject on the school curriculum, the teaching of social studies is often encountered with a lot of problems. Specifically some of these problems include:

1. **The use of Unqualified and Professional Teachers:** Teachers of other disciplines such as social science and humanities are recruited to teach the subject. These teachers are not only interested in teaching the subject but they know little about the implementation of social studies curriculum.
2. **Lack of Instructional Materials and Resources for Teaching:** Non-availability or inadequate instructional materials to a large extent badly affect the teaching of social studies. Also, a lot of social studies teachers' reliance on readymade materials that are not readily available at all times. Some of them also lack improvisational competencies as well as that of resourcefulness required to withstand the pressure from students.
3. **Voluminous Curriculum Content is a Point Mention as observed by Nmon (2005):** To a large extent, social studies curriculum is overloaded with much content that cannot be covered within the time limit of 35 to 40 minutes given to a lesson. This makes, them to often over load the students with assignments just to cover the day's lesson. Hence, time allocated to the subject constitute a major setback.

4. **Lack of Adequate and Useful Textbooks on the Subject:** Because of the newness of the subject on the school curriculum, there exists lack of useful or suitable textbook on the subject. Apart some scarcity of these books, those written by none professional teachers are not suitable as they lack some vital issues and content required for the subject. Sometimes the age, level and aptitude o the students are not considered because of the influence of their various disciplines and laziness.
5. **Poor Attitude of Both the Teacher and Students to the Subject:** Teaching and learning ought to be a complementary process but sometimes, due to moral laxity the teacher may not be able to teach the subject inspiring to motivate the students to learn. Such may cripple the process (Birabil and Ogeh, 2020).
6. **Increase in Class Size:** Social studies are made compulsory at the basic level of education in Nigeria. Due to constant increase in class size, some of the classes have a population of over 70 students without a proportional space and teaching materials. In such a case, how can better learning come into play?
7. **Inappropriate:** Methods use by teacher is not so encouraging. Some of the teaching method and techniques adopted by social studies teachers are not only being outdated but discouraging. Most of the teachers do not use appropriate teaching methods. They solely depend on lecture and other traditional methods instead of some innovative teaching method as well as computer assisted instruction that are more interactive to the students or make them to have control over their learning activities.
8. **Faulty Evaluation Techniques Adopted by Some Social Studies Teachers:** Evaluation is meant to measure the extent the entire objection law been attained or to the Determine the strength and weakness of a lesson. A lot of social studies teacher often make insignificant of impact in assessing the student achievement as regards the three domains-cognitive, affective aspects of learning out to look at all aspect of learning
9. **Absence of Logical Scheme of Work:** Many teachers who are responsible for preparing scheme of work on social studies are ignorant of the existing syllabus while others are badly planned (Fadiye 2001). This pages serious problem and the resulting affect effective teaching of the subject.
10. **Few Teacher Education Programmers Exist to Train Teachers:** Teachers of social studies were either trained at National Teachers institute (NTI) or colleges of Education for the award of Nigerian certificate of education (N.C.E) programme and could not further their education because of the fewness of the number of universities offering degree programme in social studies in Nigeria
11. **Problem of Understanding on the Part of the Student:** Most students often experience

difficulties in understanding some concept or lesson being delivered by teacher. Majority of teachers at the primary school level uses local languages while those at the junior secondary uses English languages during teaching. This causes confusion in terms of transfer of knowledge.

## 12. The Dynamic Nature of the Social Studies

**Content:** Nmom (2005) averred that constant change in the content and method of social studies de-stabilizes the subjects and make it difficult for student to understand. The above problems do not allow the student to experience sequence, continuity and integration in the subject.

## 13. Failure and Laxity on the Part of Curriculum Planners, Ministry of Education and Government to Popularized the Subject:

Apart from making the subject compulsory at the basic education level of education, social studies is not included in the senior school certificate examination by either west African school certificate examination (WASCE) or National examination board (NECO) and that of joint matriculation and examination board (JAMB). Instead, subject like civic education, citizenship education and others are introduced into the senior school certificate examination in Nigeria. Above all, the idea of Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi, (2008) cannot be easily swept under the carpet in any worthwhile discourse as they subsumed the problems under (1) human factor (2) government factor (3) Teacher factor (4) school factor and (5) community factor.

## 2. CONCLUSION

This paper has extensively examined the issues and problems facing the effective study of social studies in Nigerian schools. Although, most of these challenges are peculiar to Nigeria schools and they are not in-born. however if it is generally believed that no educational system rises above the quality of its teachers, then, it is mostly within the expertise of the social studies teacher displaying his/her wealth of knowledge and skills that can stand the test of time. Equally problematic is the attitude placed by the society on the subject. Maybe, the aim and objectives of the subject are not yet known to many. Therefore, the entire society should provide an enabling environment to ensure improved social studies education endeavor, like any other subject. This will help not in small measure to promote the subject and in the end, the targeted aims and objectives of social studies. On the Nigerian school curriculum would be achieved or actualized.

## 3. RECOMMENDATION

Considering the role of social studies to national development and on the basis of the identified problems the following recommendations are put forward:

1. More qualified social studies teacher be recruited to teach the subject and Nigerian certificate in Education should be the minimum qualification for teachers.
2. Social studies teachers should be encouraged to produced and use relevant instructional materials and resources for teaching.
3. Teacher of social studies should be provided with remedial, refresher and induction courses in the subject so as to update and improve on their academic and professional knowledge and skills.
4. Specialist teachers of social studies be encouraged to write or produce useful textbooks at all levels of education while students be advised to read other printed matters.
5. A well-designed social studies professional logical scheme of work be developed by head teachers at all level of education and schools in Nigeria.
6. Innovative teaching methods should be used by social studies teachers alongside the conventional method as well as that of interdisciplinary approach to teaching.
7. All teachers of social studies must seek and obtain membership of a viable organization of the social studies discipline (Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi, 2008).
8. A comprehensive techniques, method and instruments of evaluation be adopted by social studies teachers to examine, all the domain of the students.
9. The subject should be introduced and made compulsory at the senior secondary or certificate level, it should also be included among the subjects for entry requirements into higher institutions across the country.

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