

SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM FOR THE FUTURE: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

Social Studies came into being to meet various societal needs. However, it has been observed that the Junior Secondary School Social Studies curriculum is in dire need of review in the face of emerging societal issues, viz, pipeline vandalism, oil bunkering, bombing, hate speeches, ethnicity, libel, religious fanaticism, sex education illiteracy among children, rape, kidnapping, human-trafficking, high level of corruption, street begging, high rate of unemployment, brain-drain, and border crossing by which it can only continue to be relevant to meeting societal needs. Past studies have established the desire of stakeholders for and the importance of inclusion of social issues into the Social Studies curriculum. This study measured the perception of teachers about articulating these emerging societal issues in Nigeria for consideration for inclusion in the JSS Social Studies curriculum to stem the tide of the menace from the root. This work also added to the existing knowledge by enlarging the scope of some of the topics already contained in the Social Studies curriculum with a view to further synchronizing the curriculum content with the current societal reality. Two research questions were explored with two 10 - item questionnaires administered on a sample of 100 Junior Secondary School Social Studies teachers across Ibadan North L/G area of Oyo State. Descriptive analysis using mean was used for data presentation. The study found that teachers consider matters on religious fanaticism, joblessness, border crossing, brain-drain, hate speech, bombing, and oil bunkering as emerging issues that should be well articulated in the JSS Social Studies curriculum. It was recommended that curriculum planners should incorporate the use of videos of past wars to guide students against violent acts. Social Studies lessons should inculcate economic skills and underscore the implications of border crossing, brain-drain, vandalism, bombing, and oil bunkering to dissuade citizens from the nefarious acts.

Keywords: *Social Studies, Curriculum, Societal Issues.*

Introduction

Prior to the 1969 national curriculum conference, which birthed the emergence of Social Studies, the subject was taught as Geography, Political Science, Economics and Civics. However, the horrible experience Nigerians had, at that time, as a result of the Civil War (from 1967 to 1970), necessitated the need for a robust subject that could reflect on and unify the various needs, aspirations as well as chart the course of progress and unity of the various sections of the country forward.

Thus, the conference delegates recommended the integration of the various social science-based subjects as Social Studies

at the primary and lower forms of secondary school education in Nigeria (Okobia, 1984). Danilo (2017) lent credence to this by asserting that the idea of Social Studies was borne out of the need to tackle various social problems such as unemployment, indiscipline, religiosity, pride, corruption and selfishness militating against Nigeria's existence. This is also in tandem with the view of Nwaubani (2005), that the need for Social Studies became necessary "after the Nigerian Civil War when it was envisaged by curriculum planners that through the teaching of Social Studies in Nigerian schools, political stability, national consciousness and unity could be promoted in Nigeria".

Like other social sciences, the concept of Social Studies is a difficult one to define, because its definition does not enjoy universal acceptability. Scholars have presented various conflicting ideas to define Social Studies (Nelson, 2001; Evans, Sandra, & Kevin 2014) based on the aims and objectives of their respective societies. The inconsistency of the definition of Social studies compelled Barr & Barth (1977) as mentioned in Ikwumelu, Mbang, & Ogene (2015) to refer to Social studies as a “schizophrenic bastard child”.

However, Social Studies is generally conceived as a single subject whose content borrows from social science subjects like History, Civic Education, Geography, Economics, as well as a collection of separately taught social science subjects (Nelson, 2001). According to Nwaubani (2005), the contents of Social Studies could be organized via a number of approaches, some of which include the separate subject, the thematic and integrated approaches. The separate subject approach connotes that the contents of the subject are taught as Government, History, Economics, Civic Education, and other related disciplines (Clark, Schug, & Harrison, 2009). The thematic and integrated approach unifies various concepts, ideas, notions, societal challenges and issues bothering the various segments of the country from the allied subjects for the purpose of producing an integrated content for social studies (Ogunsanya, 1984, & Svetlana, 2014).

Social Studies was birthed out of the need to tackle various social problems militating against the existence of Nigeria, by developing in learners the knowledge of past and current political leaders, government institutions and their functions, as well as inculcating skills, attitudes and values in the learners to become active, responsible and engaged in society. In the words of Nwaubani, 2005, Social Studies concisely aims at:

- i. inculcating national consciousness and national unity in learners,
- ii. producing good citizens capable of and willing to contribute to the development of the society and
- iii. inculcating in learners the acceptable societal values, attitudes and developing

in learners the ability to adapt to their changing environment.

These aims of Social Studies are a clear reflection of the following national aims of education as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (2013):

- Integration of national consciousness and national unity.
- The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
- The training of the mind in order to understand the world around.
- The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

Unfortunately, in the face of currently emerging societal challenges, it cannot be totally said that the aims of Social Studies are being fully achieved in the face of current emerging societal issues affecting the peace and progress of the country. The need for urgent attention from all relevant stakeholders targeted at solving these social maladies disrupting the growth and development of the country is, thus, highly imperative. Although, research has shown that there is much discourse about societal challenges, however, very little or no research has recently articulated the burning emerging societal issues militating against Nigeria for onward inclusion in the Social Studies curriculum (Nyden, 2010). Since we are living in a dynamic society, Social Studies curriculum ought to be adjusted to suit our current societal needs.

A major effort put in place by government to curtail social misdemeanor is the introduction of Social Studies in our institutions of learning with a view to inculcating the right values and skills in the minds of young people and dissuading them from social ills. Yet, the present Social Studies content has not proven adequate enough to address the current issues (Malinowski, 2012., Osakwe, 2012 cited in Opoh, Sunday, &

Ogbaji, 2014). Although, the teaching of Social Studies has seemingly concentrated on the individual's behavioural dispositions such as honesty, humility, however, research has shown that current societal issues are neither contained in the Social Studies curriculum nor discussed in class (Libresco, 2003 cited in Malinowski, 2012), since Social Studies content has been drastically reduced and is only taught in passing (Jekayinfa, 2018).

Most crucial of the current emerging issues in Nigeria are pipeline vandalism, oil bunkering, bombing, hate speeches, ethnicity, libelous statements, religious fanatics, sex education illiteracy among children, raping, kidnapping, human-trafficking, high level of corruption, street begging, high rate of unemployment, brain-drain, and border crossing (Opoh, Sunday, & Ogbaji, 2014). These issues are threats to the oneness and development of our dear country. And, accentuating them in the Social Studies curriculum will produce a robust and innovative version of the curriculum adequate enough to stem the tide of the issues and foster a reinvigorated and united nation (Malinowski, 2012).

A review of the JSS Social Studies curriculum shows that the scope of some of the topics needs to be broadened in an attempt to accommodate contemporary societal needs in the curriculum (Sofadekan, 2012). For instance, the scope of "family", as a topic, needs to be enlarged to entail effects of adultery, prostitution and single parents on the growth and development of children, and by extension, the country. This is because, many constituents of nuisance in society are products of broken homes (Comfort, Hezekiah, & Odunayo, 2014).

Furthermore, under the topic, "conflict", it is observed that the student-teacher's activities do not include exposing students to videos. Exposing students to videos of past wars will enhance their understanding of deadly effects of conflicts on the country. This is necessary to dissuade young minds from embarking on immolation missions (Greenberg & Zanetis, 2012). Though "economy" is one of the

contents of Social Studies, however, the activities involved in teaching this topic are not practical-oriented, which limits the intent of teaching it.

Therefore, there is a need to leverage on the topic, "economy" by incorporating activities geared towards sensitizing students towards self-reliance in the curriculum (Obama, 2009 cited in Opoh, et al, 2014). Social Studies class activities for the topic, "family education," should also entail sex education to help young ones in their interpersonal relationships and to avoid unwanted pregnancies which often lead to procreating children unplanned for with its inherent effects on the entire society (Nakpodia, 2012). The need to expand these topics to accommodate the various related emerging issues in the JSS Social Studies curriculum and to teach them emphatically in class can no longer be underestimated.

Nigeria has been faced with these societal issues, in the last few years which, in no distant time, if not urgently addressed, are capable of bringing the entire Nigerian system to a state of utter collapse. Research has shown the importance of including current issues in the Social Studies curriculum, although, without emphatically articulating these currently emerging societal issues for inclusion in the curriculum. Thus, the need to identify these societal issues and measure the perceptions of teachers about the need to include and emphasize them in the JSS Social Studies curriculum with a view to tackling them from the root is the crux of this work.

Research Questions

1. What are the emerging societal issues in Nigeria?
2. What is the perception of JSS Social Studies teachers about the inclusion of emerging societal issues in the JSS Social Studies curriculum?

Research methodology

Survey method was adopted to investigate teachers' perception on whether or not emerging societal issues should be included in

the JSS Social Studies curriculum. The instruments used to explore the research questions were two self-developed questionnaires of 15 positive and negative statements entitled Emerging Societal Issues in Nigeria (ESIN) and Teachers' Perception on Emerging Societal Issues in Nigeria (TPESIN). The instruments were subjected to face and content validity with a research expert at the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, before being administered on five JSS Social Studies teachers for a reliability test determined via Cronbach alpha calculated at 0.73 and 0.76 co-efficient respectively. After the reliability test, the number of statements was reduced to 10 each.

The assistance of colleagues was sought for the questionnaires administration on a hundred Junior Secondary School Social Studies teachers across public secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Ibadan, Oyo State. The respondents' responses were scored based on a four-point Likert-like scale, with the positive items scored as strongly agree (04), agree (03), disagree (02), strongly disagree (01) while the negative items' scores were: strongly agree (01), agree (02), disagree (03), strongly disagree (04).

Data Presentation and Results

Research question 1: What are the emerging societal issues in Nigeria?

Table 1: Emerging Societal Issues in Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1	Pipeline vandalism, oil bunkering, bombing are emerging issues disturbing Nigeria.	23	12	43	22	2.36
2	Hate speech, ethnicity are currently gaining ground in Nigeria.	12	34	36	18	2.40
3	Libel is a new phenomenon in Nigeria	21	14	35	30	2.26
4	Religious fanaticism is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria	20	15	44	21	2.66
5	Kidnapping, human-trafficking is not a new major problem in Nigeria.	15	20	42	23	2.27
6	Corruption has been part of the Nigerian system right from time.	22	13	45	20	2.37
7	Street begging is now a major societal problem.	9	80	5	6	2.92
8	Joblessness is an emerging issue confronting Nigeria	39	50	9	02	3.26
9	Border crossing, brain-drain are now serious issues affecting Nigeria	9	51	33	7	2.62
10	Sex education illiteracy, raping is becoming rampant among the children, teenagers/youths in Nigeria.	22	24	43	11	2.57

SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree. Grand Mean= 2.57

Table 1 shows that the mean of each of positive statements 7,8 and 9 was greater than the grand mean of 2.57, while the mean of negative statement 4 was less than the grand mean. These figures depict teachers' agreement to the fact that the issues raised in the items 4, 7, 8 and 9, viz, religious fanaticism, street begging, joblessness, border crossing and brain-drain are currently emerging societal issues facing Nigeria.

However, each of other statements on the table met with a negative response as the mean of each of positive statements 1, 2, 3, 6 and 10 was less than the grand mean, while the mean of the negative statement (item 5) was greater than the grand mean. This implies that teachers are of the opinion that issues such as pipeline vandalism, oil bunkering, bombing, hate speech, ethnicity, libel, kidnapping, human-trafficking and corruption raised in

items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 10 respectively are relatively not new in the country.

Research question 2: What is the perception of JSS Social Studies teachers about the

inclusion of emerging societal issues in the JSS social studies curriculum?

Table 2: Teachers' Perception on Emerging Societal Issues in Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1	JSS Social Studies curriculum should not entail exposing students to videos of past wars.	9	32	34	25	2.75
2	Development of economic skills should be encouraged in the Social Studies curriculum.	36	27	15	22	2.77
3	Sex education should be emphasized in the JSS Social Studies curriculum.	29	17	32	22	2.53
4	Issues on border crossing, brain-drain should be well articulated in the JSS Social Studies curriculum.	17	20	38	25	2.29
5	Implications of street begging should be well articulated in the curriculum.	48	43	04	5	3.34
6	Implication of corrupt practices on society should not be articulated in the curriculum.	7	2	34	57	3.41
7	Hate speech, ethnicity is a major issue that is worth being included in the JSS social studies curriculum.	38	45	7	10	3.11
8	Kidnapping and human-trafficking should be discussed in clear terms in the JSS Social Studies curriculum.	8	22	47	23	2.15
9	Effects of pipeline vandalism, oil bunkering, bombing should be discussed in clear terms in the JSS Social Studies curriculum.	36	40	15	9	3.03
10	Libel is not so serious an issue that should be discussed in the JSS Social Studies curriculum.	30	36	13	21	2.25

SD = Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree. Grand Mean= 2.76

Table 2 shows that the mean of each of positive statements 2, 5, 7 and 9 was greater than the grand mean of 2.76, while the mean of each of negative statements 1 and 10 was less than the grand mean. These figures depict teachers' agreement to the fact that the issues raised in the items 1, 2, 5, 7, 9 and 10 viz, exposing students to videos of past wars, development of economic skills, implications of street begging, hate speech, ethnicity, effects of pipeline vandalism, oil bunkering, bombing, libel should be well articulated in the JSS social studies curriculum. However, each of other statements on the table met with a negative response as the mean of each of positive statements 3, 4 and 8 was less than the

grand mean, while the mean of the negative statement (item 6) was greater than the grand mean. This implies that teachers are of the perception that issues such as sex education, border crossing, brain-drain, kidnapping, human-trafficking, and libel raised in the items 3, 4, 8, and 10 respectively need not be incorporated into the JSS social studies curriculum.

Discussion of Findings

The descriptive analysis of data collected to answer question one using mean scores showed teachers' agreement to the fact that issues

bothering on religious fanaticism, street begging, joblessness, border crossing and brain-drain are truly emerging societal issues militating against the growth and development of society. This may be as a result of: incessant religious crises in recent times - most especially in places like Kaduna State, street begging which is now common place in virtually every nook and cranny of the country, the rate of unemployment that has now soared up beyond imagination, many Nigerians being killed trying to cross border to Europe and many Nigerian professionals migrating to other parts of the world in search of greener pastures. This finding corroborates the findings of Opoh, Sunday, & Ogbaji, 2014 who established that the contents of Social Studies curriculum need to be reviewed to accommodate issues presently bothering society.

The findings of question one further revealed teachers' belief that issues such as pipeline vandalism, oil bunkering, bombing, hate speech, ethnicity, libel, kidnapping, human-trafficking and corruption are relatively not new. This might be because, public property(including pipeline) vandalism and theft have always been rampant in the country, and vestiges of slavery are still noticeable in the characters of many Nigerians. The study of Nyden, 2010, which found that some societal challenges are commonly discussed in Social Studies classes, corroborates the finding of this work.

Findings through research question two showed that teachers are of the opinion that exposing students to videos of past wars, development of economic skills, implications of street begging, hate speech, ethnicity, effects of pipeline vandalism, oil bunkering, bombing, libel should be well articulated in the JSS Social Studies curriculum. The teachers' opinion might have been influenced by the untold mishaps the issues have brought upon Nigeria. This finding is in tandem with the findings of Sofadekan, 2012; Opoh, Sunday, & Ogbaji, 2014 who established the necessity to allow the Social Studies curriculum accommodate the emerging needs of the society.

Also, research question two revealed that teachers are of the perception that issues such

as sex education, border crossing, brain-drain, kidnapping, human-trafficking, and libel need not be incorporated into the JSS Social Studies curriculum. This may be because of the belief that students are exposed to the knowledge of such issues in school. This is in tandem with the findings of Haas and Laughlin (2000) cited in Lipscomb and Doppen, (2012) that many Social Studies teachers so understood the importance of current issues that they incorporated it in their class discussion, at least, once in a while. Further, teachers' disinterest to have some issues included in the Social Studies curriculum might have been born out of their high workload, which corroborates the findings of Malatest, 2015 and Richards, 2012 cited in Jennings, Brown, Frank, Doyle, Oh, Davis, Rasheed, DeWeese, Cham, DeMauro, & Greenberg, 2017, that the high workload of teachers is a major factor that affects their health, home duties and makes them unhappy.

Conclusion

Social Studies contents are designed for the purpose of revamping society from social misdemeanor. Research, however, indicates that the current contents of JSS Social Studies need be reviewed in the face of emerging issues in Nigeria. This study established that issues bothering on religious fanaticism, street begging, joblessness, border crossing, and brain-drain are truly emerging societal issues militating against the growth and development of Nigeria and should therefore be entrenched in the curriculum. The study however revealed that issues such as pipeline vandalism, oil bunkering, bombing, hate speech, ethnicity, libel, kidnapping, human-trafficking, and corruption are relatively not new in the country, although equally important to be taught in school to avert their adverse effects.

Recommendations

Following the findings of this study, the recommendations below are suggested:

1. Curriculum planners need to emphasize issues on religious fanaticism, street begging, joblessness, border crossing, hate speech, ethnicity, pipeline

vandalism, oil bunkering, bombing, libel, and brain-drain in the JSS Social Studies curriculum. This will galvanize teachers to expose the children to the implications of the issues and the need to shun them.

2. Social Studies teachers should be encouraged to expose students to videos of past wars and economic skills to dissuade the children from crises and paths that could subject them to penury in the nearest future. This is capable of strengthening national unity and economic development.
3. School administrators should consider Social Studies an important subject and provide an adequate platform for students and teachers to rub minds together on the many issues affecting society and the ways out of them.
4. Research studies should investigate students' knowledge on current societal issues to ascertain if teachers expose them to such issues. Future research works should also be devoted to investigating the methodology used in teaching these issues and suggest better strategies of teaching them.

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