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## EXPLORING INNOVATIONS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM AND PRACTICE

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### **Abstract**

*This paper is an ex-ray on the innovation of Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria. It is pertinent to note that in recent years, Social Studies has been a tool par excellence for shaping and moulding the moral values and character of citizens to attain their dreams and aspiration seems to be outdated. The implication of this antiquated content of Social Studies has risen the cases of crime, kidnappings, corruption, religious violence among others. Therefore, this paper makes a case that the society through the school can only correct the moral decadence through innovation of Social Studies curriculum content, through the use of appropriate modern methods, application of ICT in Social Studies and effective evaluation of Social Studies curriculum. Thus, the paper examined the concept of Social Studies. More so, the paper discussed the aims and objectives of Social Studies as incorporated in the National Policy on Education. The paper further suggests certain areas which require innovation to suit modern society as well as the challenges and trends in the modern world.*

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Curriculum practice, Innovation, Social Studies.

## **Introduction**

Curriculum is a deliberate, systematic and planned attempt undertaken by the school to modify or change the behaviours of the citizens of a particular society. Curriculum is an embodiment of all the knowledge, skills and attitudes which a nation, through the schools, imparts to her citizens. “Knowledge” here refers to all the facts, theories, principles, generalizations and rules needed to be assessed and acquired by students to be certified as competent in a field. The National Policy on Education (2004) stated that Social Studies was introduced into the official school curriculum following its success in solving societal problems not only in Britain but also in America as well as Nigeria in the late 1960s. This programme of study was first introduced in Britain after the 1st and 2nd world wars in order to appease the conscience of the citizens to respect constituted authority, submissive to their parents, show regards to the elders of the society, help to protect public property, value the lives of fellow citizens and contribute positively towards the development of the society (Mezieobi & Ubi, 2015).

The national curriculum conference held from 8-12 September, 1969 in Lagos was a major turning point in the history of curriculum development in Nigeria and a historical landmark in the history of education in Africa. The NPE (2004) observed that it was the first national attempt to change the colonial orientation of the Nigerian educational system and promote national consciousness and self-reliance through the educational process. The recommendations of the national conference according to Ikem and Ajiboye (2012) emphasize national unity, citizenship education, national consciousness, nationalism and national reconstruction. These recommendations became the bedrock through which the Nigerian Educational goals were realized.

The desire to achieve the aforementioned goals prompted the introduction of more subjects into the primary and secondary schools among which was Social Studies. The Nigerian Social Studies curriculum stated that students should be educated to have knowledge, skills, attitude, and values. Those knowledge covers a very wide range of information from ancient Nigerian history to

geography, from culture to trade in different themes (from 4th grade to 5th grades) very much the same as the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2013) the largest professional association for Social Studies educators in the world, defines Social Studies as:

the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, Social Studies provide coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of Social Studies is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.

According to Akinlaye (2013), the following are the goals and objectives of Social Studies as incorporated in the National Policy on Education in Nigeria. These are: to create an awareness and understanding of our social and physical environment as a whole in its natural, man-made, cultural and spiritual resources for national development; to develop the capacity to learn and acquire certain basic skills including those of listening, speaking, reading, writing and calculation. those skills of observations, analysis and inference which are essential for the formation of a sound and rational judgment in the social, economic and political environment; to ensure the acquisition of a relevant body of knowledge and information which are essential prerequisites to personal development as well as a positive personal contribution to the improvement of mankind; to develop a sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and inter-dependency of all members of the local community and the wider national and international community; to develop in student's positive attitudes of togetherness, comradeship and cooperation towards a healthy nation; and the inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard-work, fairness and justice at work and play, as well as one's contribution

to the development of the nation and to encourage learners to appreciate all the things they have learnt are inter-related.

However, much has changed in the world and educational system since Social Studies curriculum was published and initiated in the school system. As the society becomes more complex and advance in technology man's desire to restructure Social Studies has become paramount. Some of such innovation includes, change in methodology, change in knowledge, change in evaluation strategies and change in education. The revision or innovations aims at providing a framework for teaching, learning and evaluation in Social Studies that includes a sharper articulation of curriculum objectives that reflects the global trend. This paper therefore, emphasizes re-orientation and re-examination of the current values practice and re-engineering of the teaching methods of Social Studies in Nigeria.

### **Concept of Innovation in Education**

The word "innovation" is in vogue or synonymous with invention, most fundamentally, "innovation" means doing things in a new way. The Cambridge International Dictionary of English described innovation from many angles. Foremost, it means to make or become different or to exchange one thing for another thing, especially of a similar type. As a result, one can talk of organizational, educational, social or political innovation. In a similar vein, the Encarta (2017) described innovations as 'transition from something or a shift from one state, stage or phase to another. It can also mean to alter, modify, convert, transform or transmute. It also implies revolution, conversion, adjustment or amendment. When something becomes different from its initial state, both living and non-living, we talk of 'Innovation'. Innovation according to Rogers (2017) can be defined as the process by which alteration occurs in the structure and when new ideas are invented, diffused, and are adopted or rejected, leading to certain consequences, Furthermore, innovations can be seen as evidence of growth. Meaning that what worked today can be tomorrow's recipe for failure. We ought to learn from the people we meet, pursue new ideas, methods, strategies and ways to push

ourselves away from contentment. Our homes are innovated as our needs adds and flow. Our places of employment are innovated as the winds of economic forces blow and new opportunities come. All these point to the fact that innovation is inevitable.

Since man is a dynamic being, Social Studies curriculum innovation can be viewed from many angles: individual, social, organizational, political, technological, and historical. Not surprisingly, much attention has been given to the technological aspects of innovation, among which can be included educational pedagogy. Innovation of Social Studies curriculum in education encourages teachers and students to explore, research and use all the tools to uncover something new. It involves a different way of looking at problems and solving them based on societal changes. Obasi (2018), was of opinion that curriculum innovation can be defined as a deliberate effort, perceived as new and intended to bring about improvement. As such, curriculum innovation is distinguished from change which is any difference that occurs between two different Times. Learning experiences could be redesigned to be far more relevant to student interests and career paths, personalized to their aptitudes and abilities, and responsive to their culture and identities.

### **Application of Innovative Modern Teaching Methods in Social Studies Curriculum**

Over the years, there have been visible changes in teaching style as against the memorization or same old recitation practice of teaching the students, now modern teaching methods, interactive methods of teaching have been introduced, and its result can be seen. This is an educational reform that provides an entirely different angle of teaching and learning because modern teaching methods do not treat all students to be at the same level of understanding, unlike the conventional method of teaching. Rather than being only teacher-based, modern teaching methods focus more on questioning, demonstration, explaining, practical, collaboration methods, and are more activity-based.

To cope up with the modern world and the knowledge-driven

era of technology, adopting modern ways of instruction into Social Studies curriculum is the best way to achieve its goals and objectives. So, there is an immense need for innovative and creative minds to explore unknown and unrevealed areas integrated in Social Studies. Therefore, Social Studies should be taught in a manner to tackle the 21st century challenges which are technology-driven and which require creative and innovative minds for the progress of individuals, society, and nation. Social Studies teachers should guide the students by integrating them into the modern teaching methods which will provide sufficient knowledge so that they can create opportunities for themselves and others through inquiry methods, expository methods, field trips, and so on.

### **Needs to incorporate Modern Teaching Methods into Social Studies Curriculum**

Social Studies as an integrated course of study embrace change over time and guide the learners to acquire new techniques and methods to gain knowledge that specializes them not only in theoretical study but ensures the acquisition of practical knowledge which will sharpen their skills and make them educated to face any kind of challenges. It requires an instant review of Social Studies curriculum and the reasons why modern teaching methods are necessary are:

**Learner-centeredness:** One of the essentials of modern teaching methods in Social Studies is learner-centeredness. It focuses on learners while using or applying the social inquiry method during classroom instruction. The teacher acts only as a guide, and all the learning process involves learners. **Task-Based or Activity-based:** The teacher as the facilitator of Social Studies organizes activity or task and engages students to learn. Through this way students are motivated to take part in classroom interactive activities. **Interactive in Nature:** The modern teaching method is very interactive. The teacher asks the students to form small groups or work as collaborators to perform the learning tasks and come up with the desired results.

**Integrative in Nature:** One of the vital characteristics of modern

teaching methods is it is integrative. Teachers link topics of one subject, e.g., Social Studies topics like drug use, domestic violence, safety, pollution, food distribution, crime etc. to other issues and make it integrative from the contribution of other social sciences. Peer Collaboration: Modern teaching methods not only encourage students by allowing interactions among themselves but executing research among themselves and allowing themselves to answer questions during interaction in Social Studies classes but also selects their own peers based on interest, needs, and feelings.

### **Inclusion and Utilization of Information and Communication Technology in Social Studies Curriculum Implementation**

There has been a strong emphasis in Nigerian Education to integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools by the government in the last decade. Authorities governing Nigerian education, and scholars alike has been emphasizing the important of educating students with knowledge and skills for independent and meaningful learning. This aim will be achieved better with the integration of ICT into teaching and learning Process along with implementing projects to integrate ICT under school curricula.

The subject of Social Studies is about real life for the real world. Students have experience in real life. They bring those experiences into learning environment and learning environment are impacted by those experiences. Thus, it is important to incorporate real life issues in dealing with Social Studies students. It is also true that students learning is more lasting when they deal with real life situation. (Daniel, 2012). Social Studies covers a learning area that deals with abstract issues. Those abstract issues are difficult for some young students with low cognitive development level to comprehend. Daniel, (2012). Stated that ICT has the potential to bring real life issues into classrooms in a way that was not possible before in a traditional classroom setting.

The flexibility of ICT and the Internet provides students with the opportunities for research, interaction, cooperation and collaboration (Obasi, 2018). Utilizing moving and still images,

conducting life histories, carrying out social research through ICT would make Social Studies meaningful and enjoyable to all categories of students. ICT has tools for teaching, learning, information and interaction for pupils and educators. ICT integration into Social Studies learning help to break the boredom in all ramification (Daniel, 2012).

The use of ICT in teaching and learning of Social Studies can boast the interest of students and catch their attention. The utilization of ICT in Social Studies lesson would make abstract issues or topics in teaching and learning process concrete and understandable. Utilization of ICT in Social Studies lesson can help the Social Studies teacher to carry so many students along at the same time (use for mass instruction and taking care of a wide audience).

### **Evaluation of Social Studies Curriculum in Nigeria**

Human beings in every walk of life, level, group, institutions or government have devised systems or process by which they pass judgement such as good or bad on something or somebody through a process called “Evaluation”. If the evaluation process is eliminated from human life, then perhaps the aim of life may be lost. It is only through evaluation that one can discriminate between good and bad. The whole cycle of social development revolves around the evaluation process.

The word evaluation is to form an idea or judgement about the worth of something. It includes, making judgement so that decision might be made about the future of programme, whether to retain the programme as it stands, modify it or throw it out altogether. Curriculum evaluation in education includes a wide array of activities like student’s assessment, measurement, testing, program evaluation, school personnel evaluation, school accreditation, and curriculum innovations. The term “evaluation” is sometimes used ambiguously in relation to other terms like ‘assessment and testing’. However, evaluation does not refer to the same thing as “assessment and testing” even though assessment instruments such as tests can be made use of in evaluation. Evaluation is regarded as “the

systematic attempt to gather information in order to make judgments or decisions” (Danladi 2011). Evaluation is more thoroughly defined as “the process of delineating, obtaining, providing, and applying descriptive judgmental information about the merit and worth of some object’s goals, design, implementation, and outcomes to guide improvement decisions, provide accountability reports, inform institutionalization/dissemination of decisions, and improvement decisions, and understanding of the involved phenomena” (Danladi, 2011).

Social Studies Curriculum evaluation is therefore the process of passing judgement on Social Studies programmes. It is a process of appraising Social Studies programmes to determine whether or not, programme goals have been achieved (Daramola, 2015) this is a simple definition for Social Studies curriculum evaluation. Boom (2012) defined evaluation and specifically Social Studies evaluation as the systematic collection of evidence to determine whether certain changes are taking place in the learners, as well as to determine the amount of or degree of change in individual students.

### **Evaluation of the three Domains of Learning on Social Studies Curriculum Content in Nigeria**

Benjamin Bloom (1956), identified three domains of educational activities thus: Cognitive domain deals with the mental skills (Knowledge), affective domain deals with growth in feelings or emotional areas (Attitude) and psychomotor deals with the manual or physical skills (Skills).

#### ***The Cognitive Domain***

This according to Bloom (1956) involves knowledge and the development of intellectual skills. This includes the recall or recognition of specific facts, procedural patterns, and concepts that serve in the development of intellectual abilities and skills. It has six levels, thus: Knowledge: This covers recalling of data or information. Examples: Recite a policy. Key Words: defines, describes, identifies, state, etc. Comprehension: Includes understanding the meaning, translation, interpolation, and interpretation

of instructions and problems. For example, rewrites the principles of test writing. Key Words: Comprehends, converts, defends etc. Application: This includes the use a concept in a new situation or application of what was learnt in the classroom into novel situations in the work place. For example, using a manual to calculate students holiday time. Key Words: applies, changes, computes, constructs. Analysis: This separates materials or concepts into component parts so that their organizational structure may be understood. For example, troubleshoot a piece of equipment by using logical deduction. Key Words: analyzes, breaks down, compares. Synthesis: This builds a structure or pattern from diverse elements. Put parts together to form a whole, with emphasis on creating a new meaning or structure. For example, write company operations or process manual. Key Words: categorizes, combines, compiles, composes, creates, devises. Evaluation: This makes judgments about the value of ideas or materials. For example, select the most effective solution. Key Words: appraises, compares, concludes, contrasts.

### ***Affective Domain***

The affective domain (Krathwohl, Bloom & Masia, 1973) includes the manner in which we deal with things emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasms, motivations, and attitudes. The five major categories are listed from the simplest behavior to the most complex. Receiving Phenomena: Awareness, willingness to hear, selected attention. Examples: Listen for and remember the name of newly introduced people. Key Words: asks, chooses, describes, follows, gives, holds, identifies, locates. Responding to Phenomena: Active participation on the part of the learners. Examples: Participates in class discussions. Key Words: answers, assists, aids, complies. Valuing: The worth or value a person attaches to a particular object, phenomenon, or behavior. Examples: Is sensitive towards individual and cultural differences (value diversity). Keywords: completes, demonstrates, differentiates, explains, follows, forms. Organization: Organizes values into priorities by contrasting different values, resolving conflicts between them, and creating an unique value system. Examples: Recognizes

the need for balance between freedom and responsible behavior. Key Words: adheres, alters, arranges, combines. Internalizing values (characterization): Has a value system that controls their behavior. Examples: Shows self-reliance when working independently. Cooperates in group activities (displays teamwork). Key Words: acts, discriminates, displays, influences,

### ***Psychomotor Domain***

This includes physical movement, coordination, and use of the motor-skill areas (Simpson, 1972). Development of these skills requires practice and is measured in terms of speed, precision, distance, procedures, or techniques in execution. The seven major categories are listed from the simplest behavior to the most complex (Harrow, 1972). Fundamental movements: Basic movements such as walking, or grasping. Perception: Response to stimuli such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or tactile discrimination. Physical abilities: Stamina that must be developed for further development such as strength and agility. Skilled movements: Advanced learned movements as one would find in sports or acting. No discursive communication: Effective body languages, such as gestures and facial expressions.

### **Conclusion**

To provide a sound Social Studies curriculum, there must be collaboration among skilled teachers and innovative ways of implementing it. The students should be prepared with not only theoretical knowledge but also with practical experience of the subject to face the world and compete against their competitors. In short, the inclusion of modern teaching methods at this time is necessary as it opposes the idea of traditional forms of repetition and memorization of the syllabus in educating students. To develop decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking ability, modern teaching methods are best suited. The innovative ways of teaching and learning Social Studies will make students to be more productive and encourage them to collaborate for development.

## Recommendations

Based on the foregoing exposition, Social Studies teachers should update their professional skills so as to be abreast of new innovations in their discipline through seminars, workshops and conferences and even further their academic studies. There is a need for members of society to be adequately sensitized on the importance of Social Studies. This is because there will be no meaningful development without peace and unity which is the backbone of Social Studies. There is an urgent need for value reorientation towards a skill-oriented curriculum to bring meaning to our educational system. Also, Social Studies teachers should be trained on the use of ICT and other computer applications in modern-day classrooms.

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