

## **CHALLENGES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

The paper examines the challenges for effective implementation of junior secondary schools' social studies curriculum in Nigeria. The paper discussed the concept of Social Studies, aims and objectives of Social Studies curriculum, and Social Studies curriculum. The paper discussed the concept of curriculum, concept of curriculum implementation, and the challenges for effective implementation of junior secondary schools social studies curriculum in Nigeria which include; inadequate instructional resources, lack of well-trained Social Studies teachers, challenges of national integration, difficult in selecting appropriate methods of teaching, overlapping nature of social studies contents, inflexibility, poor ICT knowledge, policy changes, frequent turnover of teachers, lack of sufficient finance, among others. The concluded that, effective teaching and learning process in Social Studies is not one way process. It is a complex task which needed both parties; teachers, learners, parents, government, and educational stakeholders. The paper recommended that; school supervisors and administrators should ensure that Social Studies teachers use appropriate teaching methods and strategies to meet the demand, instructional resource should be provided, ICT knowledge should be given to Social Studies teachers, Social Studies teachers should be given opportunities to attend seminars, conferences, workshops and in-services in order to update their knowledge of subject matter, Social Studies curriculum reviewers should reconstructions of content of the curriculum to align its' objectives with Social Studies.

**Key word:** *Social Studies, Curriculum, Curriculum Implementation, Challenges.*

**Introduction**

Education is universally perceived and acknowledged as an effective tool for meaningful development in every society, be it social, economic, political and technological. It is for the development of individual into sound and effective citizens for social advancement. Indeed, the Nigeria idea of acquisition of knowledge depends on the need to “form people in to sound and compelling residents” (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Achievement of this way of thinking prompted the selection of the Nigerian national educational objectives among which are the teaching of national cognizance and national solidarity and the teaching of right sort of qualities forms of mind for the endurance of the individual and the Nigerian culture (Mezieobi & Edinyang, 2013). Education is the process of facilitating learning or the acquisitions of knowledge, skills, values, moral, beliefs, habit, and personal development. Education is a vital in teaching a person how to use logic when decision and interacting with people; boosting creativity and enhance the management.

The implementation of social studies curriculum should not only be looking upon as a means of preparing learners for life, but should look at it as life itself. Implementation of this content should be aware of the interest and motivate the learners toward that direction (Meziekobi, 1992). Social studies must be taught in Nigerian schools for constructivist purpose, for hard work, for building good characters, for creativity, for reflective thinking, for problem solving, and for obedience. If the contents of curriculum did not include the above listed virtues, social studies curriculum should be repositioning and focus towards inculcations of these virtues in the lives of our citizens. The major aims of teaching social studies at all levels of education are to produce good and effective citizens for effective national development, but the objectives have not been realized. This certainly true, because the current high rate of crime in Nigerian society that has evaded the country in an indication of lack of proper culturing and socialization of our young citizens. For example, many of our daily newspaper report on daily newspapers report on daily bases, incidence of vices and crimes such as equipped theft, hijacking, killings, medicate misused, suicide shelling and battling among the national gathering individuals that should be improved models for the residents and other forms of atrocities (Gele, 2012). This is because social studies by its objectives in junior secondary schools is expected to inculcate in to the citizens’ desirable

knowledge of their environments, the right form of citizenship, the basic skills of reflective thinking, conflict management, problem solving amongst others for solving societal problems. The spirit of cooperation, tolerance, comradeship, and togetherness for unity in Nigeria.

### **Concept of Social Studies**

Nwoji (2006) social studies is a living subject that deals with the matter of the moment as a preparation for new and future. She further added that it is a discipline that deals with social change, better future and problems solving. Ezegbe, Ikwumelu, & Okeke (2012) appear to collaborating the above view when they assert: Social Studies is a discipline that deals with social change and ensure that a meaningful interaction of the recipients with their physical and social environment is attained. It engenders sound education of the citizens, as well as inculcates a sense of social consciousness and social responsibility; it inculcates the values, honesty, cooperation, and the need of nation, as well as the desirable skills to solve environmental problems. Ololobou (2007) define social studies as; a program of study which the society uses to instill in students the knowledge skills, attitudes and action it considers important concerning the relationship human beings have with each their world and themselves. Okam (2006) viewed social studies as the study of man and outcome of his relationship with his environment. Moreover, Okam (2011) viewed social studies as: A complex but organized process through which individual acquire worthy knowledge and attitude. Atubi & Dania (2020) opines that Social Studies is exceedingly good in helping children with diverse learning abilities in becoming efficient learners and can do more than that for value education. Okam (2021) define social studies as comprising all effort conscious and incidental direct made by a given society to accomplish certain desirable in terms of individual need as well the need of the society where the program is based.

Quartey (1984) in defined social studies as a “study that equips the youth with tools necessary in solving personal and community related problems”. National council for social studies in the United States of America has officially defined social studies as: An integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence and help young people develop the ability to make informed reasoned decision as citizens of culturally diverse democratic society in an interdependent world. (NCSS 1992). This implies that the goal of social studies purely revolves around citizenship education for cultural integration and sustainable living. Mezieobi,

Oyeoku, & Ezege (2012) have indicated that the essence of social studies instruction in junior secondary school is to equip the learner with attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills for functional living in the Nigerian society. It was reported that social studies teachers are yet to involve learners adequately in active learning engagement and condemned the expository method which is responsible for the poor implementation of the social studies curriculum and consequent poor appreciation by learners of knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills in social studies curriculum.

### **Aims and Objectives of Social Studies Curriculum**

The main aims of Social Studies Education are to generate and develop intelligent, responsible and self-directing citizens who are expected to explore opportunities to develop their potentials and as well as contribute their own quota to the improvement of group living within a social milieu (Okam, 2012). Put differently, social studies aim at producing people who are able to handle some social issues<sup>1</sup> related to man's relationship, his physical and social environment. (Onuoha, 2009). Social studies were introduced to heal some social ills toward national development (Kissock in Okeke, 2006). The objective of social studies lay emphasis on the integration of Nigerian citizens in to sound and effective citizens.

Shuaibu and Shuaibu (2020) identified objectives of the Social Studies programme may be broadly outlined as follows;

1. To create an increasing awareness and understanding of our evolving physical and social environment.
2. To develop a capacity to learn and to acquire certain skills including not only those of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and of calculation but also those of hands and head.
3. Ensure the acquisitions of the body of relevant knowledge and information, which is an essential prerequisite to personal development as well as to a positive contribution to the betterment of mankind.
4. To develop a sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and interdependence of all members of the local community, and the wider national and international communities.
5. Develop in the students, positive spirit of togetherness, comradeship and cooperation towards healthy nation
6. Promotion of understanding of social problems of their locality

7. Promotion of the ability to think reflectively
8. Creation of awareness that discipline is essential for an orderly society.
9. Demonstration of flexibility and willingness to accept necessary changes within a system.
10. The promotion of effective and active citizenship.

The National Educational Objectives from which social studies objectives are drawn that linked with philosophy are stated in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009). They are as follows:

- The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
- The inculcation of the right types of norms, values and attitude.
- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around.
- The acquisition of the appropriate skills abilities and competencies necessary for the development of the society.

Based on this the national educational objectives, Nigerian Social Studies has developed some of the following objectives for teaching in Nigerian schools:

Definitely, these laudable goals and objectives of teaching Social Studies in our institutions are hinged on the National philosophy of Nigeria and National Goals of Education as stated in (FRN, 2004)

- i) A free and democratic society“
- ii) A just and egalitarian society
- iii) A great and dynamic economy
- iv) A united, strong and self-reliant, nation
- v) A land of full opportunities for all its citizenry.

### **Social Studies Curriculum in Nigeria**

Akpan (2020) the content of Social Studies is a synthesis and composite of important generalizations about relation, problems and institutions drawn from the social science. It should however be noted that the sources of content for Social Studies cannot be limited to the Social Science alone. This is because of the multi-dimensional nature of the programme. In other words, Social Studies content is derived from concepts generalization and theories of Physical and Biological Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences. Thus, it is eclectic in nature. Social Studies

Curriculum is full of activities where learners centered but under the guidance of the teacher. Learners follow the inquiry process in dealing with problems or issues. By nature, social studies curriculum is integrated and corporates relevant knowledge from different sources as an interdisciplinary way or manner. The Nigeria centric characteristics of social studies curriculum is to emphasize the social relevance of social studies in which case it addresses the social needs, social realities and social aspiration of Nigerians (Mezieobi, 2013). The nature of social studies curriculum is a corrective and problem-solving discipline. It aims at correcting the inadequacies of our past education system during colonialism and immediately after independence. The subject emphasizes the importance of man.

### **Concept of Curriculum**

The word curriculum comes from the Latin word “curere” meaning to ‘run a course’. Over the years, different scholars have made different definitions related to the word of curriculum. Some scholars see curriculum as a program of studies, others see it as all the learning experience that a learner has under the guidance of a school. Ben-Yunus (2006) defined curriculum as the formal and informal content by process which learners gain knowledge and understanding develop skills and attitudes, appreciation and values under the auspices of an academic institution. The International Bureau of Education (2016) believes that the curriculum is a conscious and systematic selection of knowledge, skills and values: a choice that forms the way to organize the curriculum, training and assessment, considering issues such as what, why, when and how students must learn. The main goal of a quality curriculum is to give students the opportunity to acquire and develop knowledge, skills and values, as well as relevant skills and competencies to lead a meaningful and productive life. Mezieobi, Oyeaku, & Ezegebe (2012) opines that, the quality of the social studies teachers and the effectiveness of their instructional strategies in the classroom are crucial in the effective implementation of the social studies curriculum. Akpan (2020) views that, Curriculum is planned, considering the target audience in other to achieve effective learning through an appropriate means or method of implementation of equal importance.

### **Concept of Curriculum Implementation**

Implementation is the act of putting the prescribed curriculum in to practice in the school. It is the ultimate objective of curriculum development process because only after this has been done will

learners have the opportunity to experience the curriculum and benefit from it. The term Curriculum Implementation had been defined in different ways by different scholars. Guga (2008) viewed Curriculum Implementation as actualization, concretization, making real the planned curriculum. It is the actual use of the curriculum plan. It is a critical phase in the cycles of planning and delivering a curriculum. Curriculum implementation focuses on both the actual use of curriculum and attitude of those who implement it. Bennett (2005) defined curriculum implementation as the process of putting the curriculum in to work for the achievement of the goals for which the curriculum is designed. Curriculum implementation can also be defined as the translation of the objectives of the curriculum from paper to practice. In a nutshell, Irowi (2009) viewed curriculum implementation as the translation of “theory in to practice” or proposal in to action”. Curriculum is the mechanism through which the educational system inculcates in to the learner, the knowledge, skills and attitudes which the society has prescribed. Mezieobi (2013) defines curriculum implementation as day-to-day activities which school management and classroom teachers undertake in to the pursuit of the objectives in any given curriculum. Curriculum is the vehicle that contains the good (contents), the teacher is the driver who deliver the goods (contents) to the consumers of the goods (learners). Therefore, the teachers at the center of the activities in curriculum implementation. Alebiusu (2005) is of the opinion that curriculum implementation is the instrument that dictate the affairs of every educational system. Offorma (2005) maintained that curriculum implementation is the translation of curriculum in to practice. It is putting curriculum document in to action.

### **Importance of Curriculum Implementation**

Bennett (2005), Curriculum Implementation helps to cope with new technology changes in teaching and learning process and to makes the teacher to be systematic in delivery of the lesson. Mezieobi (2013), opines that Curriculum Implementation helps to make the curriculum relevant to the needs of the learner and the society as a whole and to ensure effective use of curriculum resources so as to enhance maximum productivity in school. Offorma (2005) views that, Curriculum Implementation can provides putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study for the benefit of the Learners. Not the only learners can be benefitting from it but the entire

society. The whole process is tailored to help students acquire certain subjects for their study. It's important to understand that curriculum implementation in Nigeria is not possible without students. Alebiusu (2005) visualized that an effective curriculum implementation can provide teachers, students, administrators and community stakeholders with a measurable plan and structure for delivering a quality education. Guga (2008) opines that, curriculum implementation is the process involves helping learners acquire knowledge or experience. It is important to note that curriculum implementation cannot take place without the learners.

Moreover, Curriculum Implementation helps to give learners the appropriate or relevant content with the application of the learner's environment in order to make learning real. Irowi (2009) opines that curriculum implementation helps to ensure that the set goals and objectives are achieved and also enables effective or proper assessment and evaluation of the curriculum. Obilo (2010) views that Curriculum implementation is the translation of a written curriculum into classroom practices for the benefit of the society. Curriculum Implementation as an essential part of curriculum development, brings into existence the anticipated changes.

### **Challenges for Effective Implementation of Junior Secondary Schools Social Studies Curriculum in Nigeria**

There are many problems that militating against the effective implementation of curriculum in Nigeria. Many scholars and National Teachers Institution NTI (2000) identified some major problems of curriculum implementation in Nigeria which are include;

**1. Lack of Teacher Participation in Decision Making and Curriculum Planning:** The teacher has a crucial role to play in the success of any educational programme in the nation and as such should be in the center and take an active part in the planning and development of the curriculum. Guga (2008) opines that “when teachers are not actively involved in the planning of the curriculum, a problem builds up since it is these teachers that interact with the students, know what they need and in what proportion, and actually make use of the curriculum”.

**2. Lack of Sufficient Finance:** Curriculum implementation is greatly drawn back by the lack of finance because workshops and seminars that are necessary to sensitize teachers and educationists



across the country cost a lot of money. Hence the teachers are not properly tutored on every corner of the curriculum.

**3. Frequent Turnover of Teachers:** The frequent turnover of teachers is caused by so many factors. One factor that plays a primary role is the excessive number of temporary and or part time teachers. For example, Youth Corpers are posted to secondary schools across the country. They teach for less than a year and a new set of core members replace them. There is no time to settle into the system and work with the curriculum properly.

**4. Policy Changes:** Another factor that affects curriculum development is the frequent changes in educational policies. An example is the universal primary education (UPE) which was launched in 1976 to ensure that every child who had attained such age that he or she is ripe for school, should be enrolled in school. Then the 6-3-3-4 system came. The 6-5-4 system also came, and so many others.

**5. Rapid Increase in Knowledge:** The world is growing at a tremendous rate when knowledge is concerned. Due to the development of science and technology, it become more tasking for the curriculum development process as knowledge becomes obsolete quickly hence the need for constant review for the curriculum, the method and materials of instruction. It therefore becomes difficult to stay in line with these continuous changes.

**6. Poor ICT Knowledge:** The world is developing at a rapid rate and therefore, even when the curriculum is updated, a new problem of meeting the requirements of the new elements added to the curriculum develops. Since the world is advancing technologically, the new trend of curriculums required teachers to be familiar with computers and make use of them. Nwokocha (2014) views that many teachers have not be able to utilized modern facilities in teaching and learning.

**7. Lack of trained and well-informed teachers:** You cannot give what you do not have. Hence, when the teachers and facilitators of the curriculum do not have the required skill level to teach correctly in accordance with the growing technology, then the students cannot learn. This makes the curriculum useless. Other problems Include: lack of Instructional Materials, poor reading culture, and poor learning conditions.

**8. Inflexibility:** The inflexibility of curriculum in Nigeria makes it difficult for teachers and students to properly optimize them. Different regions have different conditions and when the curriculum cannot work in any of them, a problem starts up.

**9. Review when needed:** The curriculum in Nigeria is only reviewed when there is an obvious problems observed. This is wrong, the curriculum should be constantly reviewed to keep the country in line with the rest of the world.

**10. Many Exams Bodies:** Different examination bodies have their different standards and techniques, not to talk of approaches to questions. There is a problem on how to adequately meet the needs of these bodies. NECO for BECCE and Ministry of Education for JSSLC.

**11. Overlapping nature of the course content:** The course content of Social Studies is loaded with overlapping concepts and topics which ultimately brings misunderstandings among scholars or curriculum implementers. Many concepts and topics are assumed to be borrowed or integrated into the course from other social sciences. Ivowi (2005) observed that the content of the curriculum is satisfactory through overloaded.

**12. Difficulty in selecting appropriate teaching methods:** The occasional changes needed in the area of teaching methodology are a bane to the effective utilization of Social Studies in Nigeria. Largely due to the poor educational funding, which equally brings insufficient supplies of teaching hard- wares to schools. Such methodologies as excursions, camping and participatory instructions are becoming highly difficult to utilize in our todays' classrooms, despite their usefulness. A teacher can do a great deal to keep up the interest of the learner by varying his methods of teaching and his way of presentation. As Catty (1991) pointed, the more variety he can bring into the work, the greater will be the interest of his pupils, even in works which are intrinsically uninteresting. For instance, the judicious use of field trips can help learners acquire firsthand knowledge and skills from other cultures, tribes, religions and places different form the one they are used to (Pinsent, 1999).

**13. Inadequate instructional resources:** Coupled with the problem associated with selecting appropriate teaching methodology is the shortage of relevant classroom resources for the effective teaching of Social Studies. The maxims of teaching method are for the teacher to proceed from the known to unknown, from concrete to abstract from easy to more difficult, simple to complex,

logical to psychological as well as induction and deduction for a successful classroom delivery. (Wilson, 2006). However, adequate resources relevant to the teaching Social Studies are either costly or in short supply in most our classrooms in Nigeria. For instance, things like slides and projectors, video clips, simulators, local resources and historic places are difficult to obtain and apply.

**14. Challenges to national integration:** Nigeria is going through the most hazardous and turbulent periods of its co-existence. The spate of religious and inter-tribal conflicts, the high-rate unemployment poverty and restiveness among the youths, and the scourge of militancy and insurgency which results in taking of arms against the legitimate authority of the state is torn in the flesh of its nationhood. The prime consequence of these challenges is the loss of pride and hope among sections of the country. This has equally become a bane in the effective implementation of Social Studies in Nigeria. So many people in the country are no longer hopeful about their chances in the country despite its huge human and material resources. As a global phenomenon terrorism. Onifade (2016) has created serious divisions among Nigerians which has threatened its co-operated existence to date. This has genuinely affected the implementation of effective Social Studies in the country.

Aliyu (2009) in Apkan (2020) identified some of these problems as follow:

- i. One of the greatest problems of Social Studies education is the threat and harassment it suffers in the hands of social science specialists, such as historians, geographers and economists among others. They often gang up against Social Studies because of its popularity and acceptance among people.
- ii. Another problem is lack of suitable and adequate textbooks. Students mostly rely on History, Government and other Social Science textbooks to study Social Studies. This is dangerous because the authors of those textbooks lack Social Studies orientation and so the content of those textbooks cannot be said to be appropriate for the subject.
- iii. Inadequate qualified teachers that are used to teach the subject. Thus, they resort to use teachers who specializes in history, geography, economics and government to teach the subject. Knowing fully well that they lack Social Studies orientation.

- iv. Inadequate and appropriate teaching aids are used in allocation on the time table and lack of continuity of the subject from Junior Secondary through Senior Secondary or higher institution. Economic constraints and lack of effective supervision and evaluation of Social Studies curriculum.
- v. Inability by some Social Studies teachers to reconstruct Social Studies curriculum in line with Social Studies objectives for effective implementation.
- vi. Inadequate organizing of conferences, seminars, workshop for teachers in the strategies, methods and the construction of special tools for the evaluation of Social Studies curriculum.

### **Conclusion**

On the basis of the findings, conclusion is made to the fact that implementation of Social Studies curriculum has facing a lot of problems such as: Lack of teacher participation in decision making and curriculum planning, lack of sufficient finance, frequent turnover of teachers, policy changes, rapid increase in knowledge, poor ICT, lack of trained and well informed teachers, inflexibility, review when needed, many exams bodies, overlapping nature of the course content, difficulty in selecting appropriate teaching methods, inadequate instructional resources, challenges to national integration, these problem could be reduce when government, teachers, and other stakeholders put head together in involving of Social Studies teachers in decision making of social studies curriculum, provide adequate fund to educational sector in Nigeria, recruitment of qualified social studies teachers, constantly review of social studies curriculum, giving of ICT training to social studies teachers, standardizing technique of exams stakeholders, avoid frequent change of education policy in Nigeria, encouragement of in-services to Social Studies teachers, provision of adequate instructional materials, organize conferences, seminars, workshops for teachers, alignment of curriculum content to Social Studies objectives, reaffirmation of teaching civic education and values education topic in Social Studies curriculum, and using of School supervisors and administrators as watchdog for Social Studies teachers. All the challenges facing the effective implementation of junior secondary schools' Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria is not a one-way process but, needed to put head together in order to solve the problems.

### **Recommendations**

In the views of the above, the paper recommended the following:

1. Social Studies teachers should be involved in decision making of social studies curriculum planning in Nigeria.
2. Government should provide adequate fund to educational sector in Nigeria.
3. Regularly recruitment of qualified social studies teachers in Nigeria.
4. Constantly review of social studies curriculum when the matters arise.
5. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training to social studies teachers.
6. Flexibility of Nigerian curriculum.
7. Examinations bodies should be standardized in techniques and procedures of evaluations.
8. Avoid frequent change of education policy in Nigeria.
9. Social Studies teachers should be encouraging in-services so as to advance their knowledge.
10. School supervisors and administrators should ensure that social studies teachers used appropriate teaching methods and strategies so as to meet present demand.
11. Provide adequate instructional materials.
12. Reaffirmation of teaching civic education and values education.
13. Specialists and Social Studies teachers should create awareness between the scope and content of both discipline through seminars, workshops and conferences.
14. Government and related agencies to provide appropriate instructional materials and textbooks for the study of Social Studies in schools.
15. Social Studies curriculum reviewers should reconstructions of content of the curriculum to align its objectives with Social Studies.

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