

THE STATUS OF SOCIAL STUDIES IN NIGERIA'S EDUCATIONAL SCAFFOLDING

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ABSTRACT: *The main crux of this paper is to draw the attention of all social studies practitioners, researchers, students of our discipline – social studies and others, to the fact that social studies in Nigeria's education system is not the preserve of the Universal Basic Education level schools. This is undoubtedly an integral part of it. However, there is more to it than is ordinarily perceived.*

KEYWORDS: Social Studies, Nigeria, Educational Scaffolding

INTRODUCTION

Since Nigeria's flag independence on the 1 October, 1960, the educational system has gravitated from the 6-5-4 (from 1960-1981), to 6-3-3-4 (from 1982 to 2006) to the 9-3-4 (from 2007 till August 2012), now 1-9-3-4 system. No matter the institutionalization challenges of this field of study socialstudies in Nigeria, social studies as a professional discipline has come of age in Nigeria having become a curriculum artifact that was introduced in Nigerian schools on a national scale on the 13 September, 1982. In support of this historical truism, Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2012 p.7) posited that “the introduction of social studies...in Nigerian schools and on a nation-wide scale...commenced on the 13 September, 1982...”

A human being who is born in 1982 is today (2016) thirty-four (34) years. If he/she is being regarded as a toddler in development, that human is abnormal, mentally retarded, an imbecile or, to put it straight, physically challenged. Following from the foregoing,

formalized emergence of social studies in Nigerian schools' dates back to thirty-four (34) years ago. To describe social studies today as "an emerging course of instruction (or discipline) in Nigerian education system" (Mezieobi and Edinyang, 2013 p.1) is misinformative, misleading and, therefore, fallacious. Social studies, as a field of study has come far in Nigeria.

What is most disturbing, however, as it relates to social studies and Nigeria's education system is that a good number of scholars and writers on social studies as well as researchers tend largely to pin social studies to the Universal Basic Education level to the near total exclusion of the other levels of Nigeria's education system where social studies programmes have been mounted up to the doctoral degree level. The burden of this chapter, therefore, is to draw the attention of all social studies practitioners, researchers, students of our discipline social studies-and others who may be told about social studies, to the fact that social studies in Nigeria's education system is not the preserve of the Universal Basic Education level schools. This is undoubtedly an integral part of it. However, there is more to it than is ordinarily perceived.

Conceptual Clarifications

Whatever reasons that have been adduced by scholars such as Nwagwu (1988 p.5) to relegate the import of definitions such as his assertion to the effect it that "pre-occupation with definition of terms is often a frustrating and fruitless engagement because the exercise consists in unpacking the set of preferences and prejudices of" each writer, researcher defining his terms to satisfy his needs and purposes. Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2015 p.132) endorse conceptual clarification on the ground that it minimizes communicative understanding and possible misinterpretation and help "to provide a common frame of understanding (and meaning-sharing) between the communicator and his audience" the communicatee or communicatees. Building on these premises, therefore, it is apt to explain what the following three concepts: status, social studies and Nigeria's educational scaffolding mean in the context of this exposition.

The Concept: Status

This refers to coverage or positional spread at this point in time.

Social Studies: The Meaning

In this chapter, Social Studies is not more than a professional discipline, field of study of course/subject or programme of study in designated educational institutions.

The Term: Nigeria's Educational Scaffolding

Nigeria's educational scaffolding or structure will refer to "nationally accepted and approved (and operational) formal levels or phases of education" (Mezieobi and Charles-Ogan, 2014 p.153) in their sequential order, from low to highest levels in an ascending order with each level having its prescribed terminal end.

Social Studies Education in The Context of The Contemporary Nigeria's Education System

With regard to today's Nigeria's education system, while Mezieobi (2012 p.26) observes that "Nigeria is a country...immersed in infinite search for a viable education system. Nigeria has gravitated from one brand of system to the other...we...(were) experimenting on the 1-9-3-4 (education system 'from 2007-2012) what is in place today (since August 2012) as Nigeria's education system is the 9-3-4 system. According to Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2013 p.45)

The ...(former) Nigeria's national education system: the 9-3-4 system (was) constituted by the 3-year Lower Basic Education level, former primaries 1-3, the 3-year Middle Basic Education level, former primary 4-6, 3-year Upper Basic Education level, former Junior Secondary School, 3 year Senior Secondary School level and 4 year tertiary education (which) took off in 2007.

Since August 2012, Nigeria's education system is the 1-9-4-3 system (FRN, 2014). Early childhood education is now an integral part of Nigeria's education system.

Social Studies at the UBE Level

From the inception of Nigeria's education system, the 9-3-4 system which operationalization commenced in 2007, Social Studies was a core curriculum artifact at the 9 year component of the education system, namely: the Lower Basic Education level (first 3 years), the Middle Basic Education level (the next 3 years) and the Upper Basic Education level (the last 3 years). Put differently, in the Universal Basic Education curricula, at the inception of this scheme or programme the Universal Basic Education in 2007, social studies were given a place of prominence as a disparate or discrete core curriculum.

Five years later, August 2012 to be specific, there was a revision of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Curricula. The resultant effect of this UBE curricula revision was that the new or revised curricula which emerged unfortunately removed social studies as a transparently discrete subject area and made it just a part of the new Religion and National Values curriculum which other component parts are: civic education, security education, and religion Christianity and Islam.

By sandwiching social studies as part of National Values in the new or revised UBE curricula, the framers of that curricula not only defused the import of social studies education as it were, they demonstrated abysmal lack of understanding of the ontological, epistemological and axiological framework of social studies. It needs be reiterated that the overriding goal-object of social studies in Nigeria is values' development or inculcation and that civic education, citizenship education, security education and in fact cultural education to which religion is a part, are frontier areas of any viable social studies curriculum professionally perceived.

Social Studies at the Senior Secondary Education Level in Nigeria

At the onset, let it be lamentably or regrettably and unequivocally stated that in Nigeria, as at today, there is no operational and discrete social studies curriculum for Nigeria's senior secondary schools. Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2013 p.36) made this point when they posited

that “although CESAC's social studies curriculum for senior secondary schools was approved by JCC in 1984, (yet) the curriculum has not been operationalized at the senior secondary schools till today, thirty two years after. The political directorate and their education agencies are responsible for this social studies blackout at this level.

The subjects that preponderate at the curricula of Nigeria's senior secondary schools include government, economics and geography to mention but a few that are related to social studies. These social science subjects are value-free. Unlike social studies that is value saturated, these social science subjects cannot be developing values in the student clientele. History is taught at the senior secondary school level in Nigeria. History and in fact all other school subjects if well taught have their value potentialities that can be productively tapped. But Nigeria's expository or knowledge transferring teachers in these subject areas have no professional grip as to how to distil values from their content materials to which students are being exposed or subjected to.

Civic education, a dimension or component of social studies is taught in Nigeria's Senior Secondary schools. Who teaches civic education? Is it the social studies professional or practitioner or personnel with academic credentials in political science? If it is the latter, their disciplinary bias will have no values' clarifying taint. If it is the former, all well and good provided they are committed to values' clarifying approaches in their instructional interactive arena.

The teething question, however, is that if civic education is taught at the UBE level and at the Senior Secondary School level, why not social studies be taught in Nigerian Senior Secondary Schools?

Social Studies in Tertiary Education In Nigeria

In Nigeria, social studies education is taught in both the Conventional Colleges of Education and the Conventional Universities as well as in the National Teachers' Institute. There are National Certificate of Education (NCE) social studies programmes in all Conventional Colleges of Education in Nigeria. A number of the Conventional Colleges of Education are in affiliation with some Conventional Universities to offer first degree programmes in social studies for the latter institutions.

Most Conventional Universities in Nigeria have mounted social studies degree programmes up to the doctoral degree level with Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria taking the lead in this direction. There are, however, a number of Conventional Universities in Nigeria that are lagging behind in mounting social studies programmes at the first-degree level, not to talk of higher degrees.

Nigeria's National Teachers' Institute has NCE programmes in social studies and has since 2015 started their degree programmes in Social Studies Education. The same is true of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN).

CONCLUSION

In Nigeria's education system, apart from the Senior Secondary School level, Social Studies has made an in-road into the other levels of the education system, even if it is as a discrete subject or part of a curriculum as in the present UBE curricula where social studies has since August 2012 become part of the Religion and National Values' curriculum.

Social studies as a discrete subject should not only be taught at all levels of the education system such that there is continuity of programme dissemination from the UBE level to the tertiary education level, social studies, given its import, should also be part of the General Studies programmes of Nigeria's tertiary institutions of all kind.

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