

THE FORTUNES AND CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

By

Prof. Alice A. Jekayinfa,

Department of Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education University of Ilorin, Ilorin,
Nigeria

Being a Lead Paper Presented at the 34th Annual Conference of the SOSAN Holding at the
University of Lagos, Nigeria, Between August 26th and 29th, 2018

INTRODUCTION

- ▶ **Permit me to say unequivocally, that my submission in this presentation is not sacrosanct.**
- ▶ **Rather, I believe that time will be available for us to brainstorm together, so as to draw from our pool of knowledge and experiences as Social Studies Educationists on how we can make Social Studies, which has for many decades been challenged and plagued by several factors be able to achieve the purpose for which it is set to achieve.**

Intro. Conts

I will like to use some aspects of Social Studies Curriculum such as: definitions, objectives, contents, methodology and evaluation to discuss what the fortunes and challenges of Social Studies were in the past, what they are presently and what I think they should be in the future, to discuss the topic.

Definitions of Social Studies

- ▶ Nelson (2001) opined that definitions are significant.
- ▶ Our individual lives and our multiple cultures, language interpretations and judgment depend upon them.
- ▶ Our perspectives, political and educational dealing and also, our concepts of quality and significance whether in theory, scholarship or practice are based on definitional considerations.
- ▶ Some things are valued more than the others, depending on definition

Definitions of Social Studies Conts.

- ▶ Our basic values which are justice, democracy, equality, integrity, loyalty and honesty are all dependent on evolving definitions.
- ▶ Certainly, the body of Social Studies content consists of definitions from the most trivial to the most significant for individuals and for society and this has significant implications for the school curriculum, teacher/classroom practice, the teacher education curriculum and the forms of research valued in the field.
- ▶ These are solid grounds for examining again the definitions of Social Studies in the past, present and what it may be in the future

Definitions of Social Studies Conts.

- ▶ Defining Social Studies is not an easy task.
- ▶ it is encumbered by a confounding history, conflicting conceptual ideas, and strong ideological divergence in both political and educational philosophy.

Definitions of Social Studies in the Past

- ▶ Barr, Barth, and Shermis, Goodman and Adler (1985), and Martorella (1996) for example, gave their earlier definitions of Social Studies as citizenship transmission, social sciences, reflective inquiry, informed social criticism, and personal development.

The National Council for Social Studies (NCSS)'s Definition

- ▶ The NCSS's definition that “ Social Studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence,” though amongst the past definitions since 1921, seems to be a good place to start our discussion of an appropriate definition of the subject.
- ▶ Barth (1993) provided a simpler definition of Social Studies stating that; It is the interdisciplinary integration of social science and humanities concepts for the purpose of practicing problem solving and decision making for developing citizenship skills on critical social issues.
- ▶ This appears to be a useful definition for it emphasizes the ultimate goal of social studies teaching to help students think critically and to use what they know to be active citizens.

Other Past Definition of Social Studies

- ▶ **Social Studies is the study of people. This means that people are the domain of Social Studies.**
- ▶ **It is a complex task to teach about people, and to do this, information must come from many fields of study and this is why S/S is as an integrated discipline.**

What is Social Studies?

The integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence.

anthropology

history

law

philosophy

archaeology

sociology

religion

political science

economics

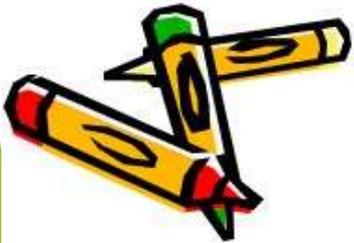
geography

psychology

humanities

mathematics

natural sciences



21st Century Definitions of Social Studies

- ▶ Adeyanju (2000), defining Social Studies for NCE through Distance Learning submitted that the discipline is ‘a programme of study which a society uses to inculcate in the pupils the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and actions it considers important concerning the relationship human beings have with each other, their environment and themselves.

21ST Century Definitions of Social Studies Continues

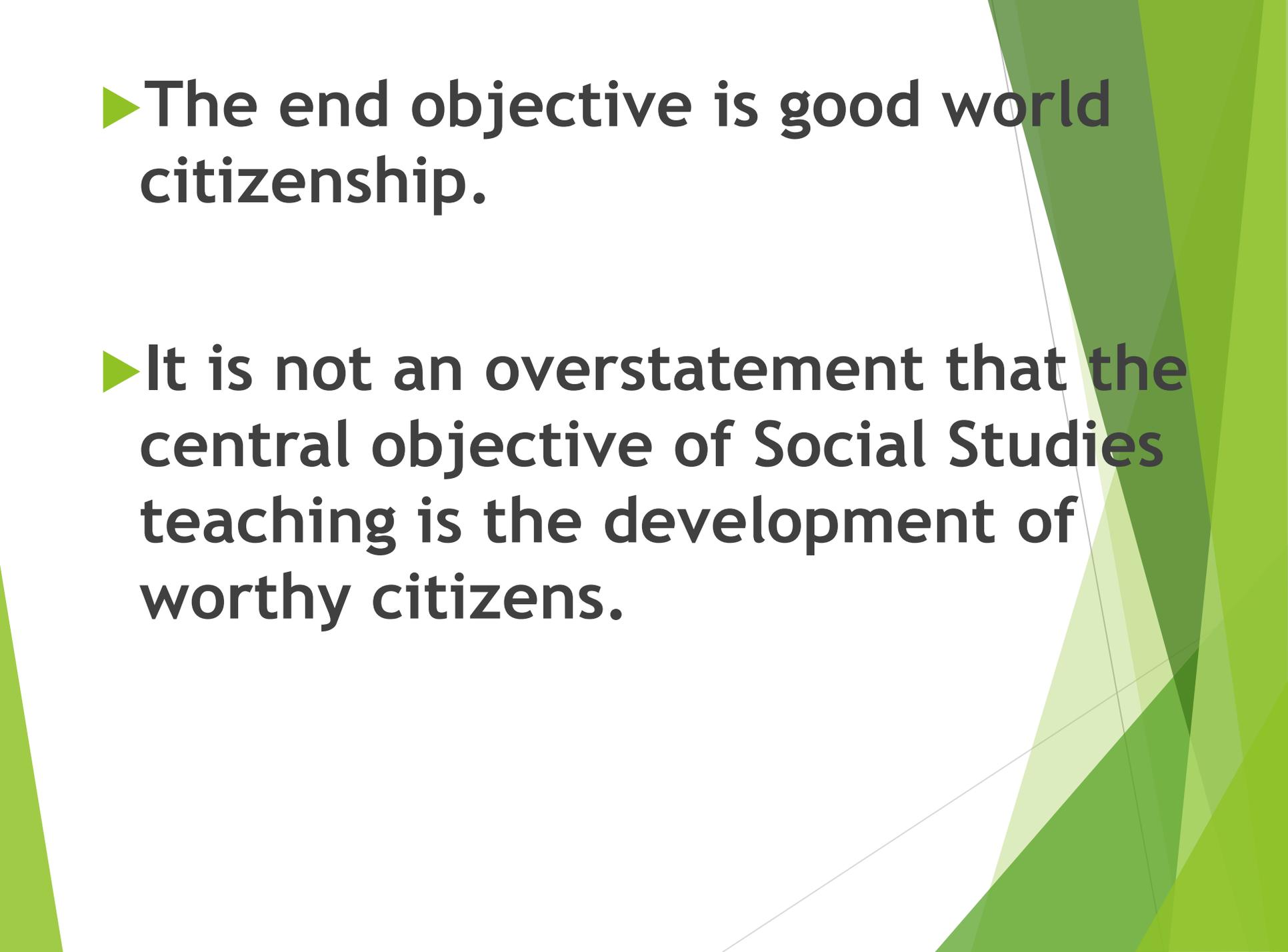
- ▶ Both Egunjobi (2004), Okunloye (2006), Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2008), Danladi; Onuorah, and Ahmed's (2012), Odetomi (2013), Ezegbe, Eskan, Anyanwu and Abiogu (2014) and Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2015) have varying definitions .
- ▶ Each definition emphasizes, in a unique way, the important elements of the content and purposes of the subject.
- ▶ With all these definitions and different perspectives, it could be understood that Social Studies is centred on the desire to proffer solutions to perceived and anticipated problems that arise from man's interaction with the environment.

Future Definitions of Social Studies

- ▶ Social Studies must be a vehicle for children to become better communicators, thinkers, researchers, computer users, and artists.
- ▶ This is the position of the NCSS, that the “core mission of social studies education is to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and values that will enable them to become effective citizens”.
- ▶ However, the future definition should be that, Social studies should be issues centered, as students search for answers to problems and dilemmas which people are confronted with today and in the past.

The Central Objectives of Social Studies Instruction

- ▶ the central objective of Social Studies instruction is the promotion of better citizenship.
- ▶ The subject educates students on becoming patriotic and responsible citizens.
 - ▶ It develops right from pre-school and into senior school to help students understand their place in the world.
 - ▶ It teaches children their roles and responsibilities particularly in relation to social and civic affairs.
 - ▶ It helps students develop critical thinking abilities,
 - ▶ It prepares them to participate competently and productively as concerned citizens and

- 
- ▶ **The end objective is good world citizenship.**
 - ▶ **It is not an overstatement that the central objective of Social Studies teaching is the development of worthy citizens.**

Objectives of Social Studies in Recent Times

- ▶ Some scholars and writers such as Ololobou (2007), Ogunbiyi and Soluade (2016) have insightfully categorized the objectives into environment (total environment), knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and emerging issues. These objectives were specifically divided as follows:
- ▶ promotion of an understanding of the social problems of the locality of the learners and finding solution to them.
- ▶ creating an awareness and an understanding of our evolving social and physical environment as a whole in its natural man-made, cultural and spiritual resources together with the rational use and conservation of these resources for National development.
- ▶ developing the skills of hand and head together with those of observation, analysis and inference which is essential to the forming of sound social, economic and political judgment.

Future Objectives of Social Studies

- ▶ Since there is a harmonious belief of what Social Studies stand for, all over the world and that is “human in society” its teaching and learning should occupy an important place in the social advancement of any society. Therefore, the future objectives of social studies should be, that which will be found useful in human’s daily existence, national, social and economic development strategies of any society, as well as in contributing to the development and dispositions of the learners at all levels.
- ▶ Jekayinfa (2015) opined that Social Studies education should have two purposes which include the enhancement of human dignity through learning and commitment to rational process as the principal means of attaining the end, and that it should be an education programme which provides the learners with knowledge, abilities, attitudes and skills that will equip them to participate intelligently in social and civic events that surround them.

- ▶ **It is hoped that Social Studies in the future would be an educational programme which would prepare learners at all level for becoming agents of positive change in the society where they find themselves.**
- ▶ **In the realization of this, Social Studies education should be consciously taught and learned to address contemporary national and global issues.**

Social Studies Curriculum Contents at the UBE Level

- ▶ **The National Policy on Education which as of today, have six editions which are: 1977, 1981, 1998, 2004, 2007 and 2013 editions as it was made Social Studies compulsory at the Junior Secondary School (JSS) in the first five editions, 1977-2007.**

- ▶ From the inception of Nigeria's basic education system, the 9-3-4 system which became operationalized in 2007, and even during the former 6-3-3-4 system, Social Studies was a core curriculum artifact at the basic 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).
- ▶ In August 2014, there was a revision of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Curricula which brought the new or revised curricula that unfortunately removed Social Studies as a transparently discrete subject area and made it just a part of the new Religion and National Values curriculum with other four component parts which 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 curriculum planners not only defused the importance of Social Studies education as it were, they demonstrated abysmal lack of understanding of the philosophy of Social Studies.
- ▶ It needs to be reiterated that the overriding goal-objective 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.
- ▶ The introduction of the Religion and National Values Curriculum which in essence is to whittle down the presence of Social Studies at the junior secondary, is bound to have ripple effects on the attainment of the goals of Nigerian education in general (Ogunyemi, 2007).

Junior Secondary Social Studies Curriculum Contents as at Today

- ▶ As at present, the restructuring of the Basic Education Curriculum led to the merger of some related subjects such as: Social Studies, Civic, Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Religious Studies and Security Education. All these subjects are under the umbrella of Religion and National Values (R&NV).
- ▶ With this development, Social Studies thus became a theme under the conglomeration of the new subject. It is no more regarded as separate subject as it used to be. The merging of five subjects into only one will definitely affect their contents, teaching strategies, resources needed, classroom usage, teaching learning activities and the evaluation procedure of the new curriculum. This is what is happening to Social Studies presently. The subject has lost its content value. In the former 9 year Basic Education Curriculum which was used from 2008-2013, there were 6 themes and 21 topics in the JSS One Social Studies Curriculum. In JSS Two, there were 14 themes and 34 topics and in JSS Three, there were 6 themes and 14 topics.

All these have been pruned down in the Religion and National Values curriculum. In the new curriculum, there are just 4 themes and 10 topics in JSS One Social Studies component of the new curriculum, In JSS Two, there are 4 themes and 7 topics, while in JSS Three, there are 5 themes and 10 topics. In essence, the former JSS Social Studies contents of 26 themes and 69 topics have been reduced to 13 themes and 27 topics. What do we do to revive the fortune of Social Studies? Let us brainstorm.

In the Junior Secondary Certificate Examination (JSCE), just about ten questions are requested from Social Studies. Is this how the subject will achieve the objective of producing good citizen? Where do we go from here? Let us discuss.

Junior Secondary Social Studies Curriculum Contents Compared

2008 - 2013

CLASSES	THEMES	TOPICS
JSS 1	6	21
JSS 2	14	34
JSS 3	6	14
TOTAL	26	69

2014 TO DATE

CLASSES	THEMES	TOPICS
JSS 1	4	10
JSS 2	4	7
JSS 3	5	10
TOTAL	13	27

Social Studies Curriculum Content in the Future

- ▶ Let us remember that the general goals of Nigerian education is to build a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy and a land full of opportunities for all citizens;
- ▶ and the Nigerian's philosophy of education is also, based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen, which Social Studies was introduced to achieve.

- ▶ **Therefore, the contents of the subject should be loaded with more topics on religion, values, security and citizenship education concepts instead of lumping the subject with other four subjects which hitherto are components of Social Studies.**

Methods of Teaching Social Studies in Schools

- ▶ At present students often consider Social studies to be dull and boring, (Chiodo and Byford, 2006).
- ▶ Woolfolk (2010) was of the view that much of today's classroom teaching and learning should focus on activities which will lead the students acquire facts, rules, and action sequences.
- ▶ Further more, Chiodo and Russell (2006) noted that students have more interest in a topic when a variety of teaching methods are implemented.

Recommendations on Method of Teaching Social Studies in Future

- ▶ **Considering the importance of Social Studies, Adeniji (2004) suggested that teachers of the subject at all levels of education need to be familiar with the contents and methods appropriate for teaching each item in order to interpret the content of Social Studies correctly and encourage its learning.**
- ▶ **This is mainly because when Social Studies instructional methods are related to the content, learning will cease to be fragmentary and memorization of unrelated facts and concepts will end.**

- ▶ **It is only when Social studies content is related to instructional methods that students will be able to appreciate the importance of the subject and pass valid judgment of what the subject is all about.**
- ▶ **Ikwumelu (2002), Senesi (2002), Ikwumelu and Oyibe (2011) advised that the use of dramatization, concept mapping, simulation, group discussion and computer games are all best ways to provide students with good information.**

Where It Went Wrong And How To Set It Right

- ▶ Mezeobi, Fubara & Mezieobi (2013), confirmed the shortcomings of Social Studies by saying that “Social Studies education in Nigerian schools and colleges has failed in its educational mission in Nigeria”.
- ▶ This position was re-echoed by Osakwe (2012) that Nigerian Social Studies should begin to focus on restructuring and reconceptualising to make the subject more relevant to current challenges, events and developments.

► Ikem and Reuben (2012) asked some pertinent questions that need to be answered with regards to the journey so far in the introduction of Social Studies education in Nigeria. The response to these questions can determine whether or not Social Studies has failed in its educational mission in Nigeria or not. These questions are:

- What has been happening to poverty?
- What has been happening to unemployment?
- What has been happening to inequality?
- What gave rise to high profile corruption in the society?
- Why the high rate of insecurity?
- Why such intimidating injustice in the society?
- Why are corrupt public officials not properly prosecuted?

- ▶ **These questions are the consequences of the present state of development in Nigeria and most developing nations of the world. A nation that is tending towards growth and development must lay emphasis on reorientation and reorganization of institutions and a transformation of the people's welfare.**
- ▶ **But an enormous gap continues to exist between intended changes and actual practices in Social Studies Education in Nigeria.**

➤ **Obama (2009) recognizing the role of Social Studies in engineering sustainable national development commented that we need the insights and critical thinking skills gained in History and Social Studies to fight poverty and homelessness, crime and discrimination, and to make our nation fairer and freer.**

Conclusion and Recommendations

- ▶ In order to meet the desires and intentions of the founding fathers of Social Studies in Nigeria, the following, according to Esu (2011) and Ogunyemi (2013) are recommended for future development of the programme:
- ▶ Social Studies contents should be designed to include work ethics, dedication, honesty, national ideals and values, democratic principles, skills for data collection and analysis, decision-making process and problems solving.
- ▶ Students should be taught to show commitments, demonstrate knowledge and skills and how to participate in national economic and democratic activities.

- ▶ **Social Studies Education should be made to address issues that are today confronting the nation. The issues that are inimical to national development to be addressed include terrorism, armed robbery, hostage taking, suicide bombing, pipeline vandalism, corruption, tribalism and Boko Haramism**
- ▶ **There should be a deliberate effort to strengthening the pedagogical approaches for Social Studies teaching with a view to actualizing the quest for national development. Social Studies teaching method should focus on thought-provoking and investigation-oriented approach. It should be integrative and dynamic to enhance a transformative discipline that will chart a course for national development.**
- ▶ **The best way to guarantee the philosophical and historical sustainability of Social Studies according to Ogunyemi (2013) is for government to return to the spirit and letters of the Nigerian Social Studies Project (NSSP); because it was knitted to the country's aspirations for nation building and national development.**

▶ Nigeria's objectives as a country provide the pivot for its activities in the realms of curriculum development and education in general. These objectives for building the desired nation are five:

- ▶ (a) free and democratic society;
- ▶ (b) a just and egalitarian society;
- ▶ (c) a united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- ▶ (d) a great and dynamic economy; and
- ▶ (e) a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

▶ 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 2014 become part of the Religion and National Values' curriculum.

**THANKS FOR YOUR
ATTENTION**

The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes in various shades, including light lime green, medium green, and dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the right side of the frame, creating a modern, layered effect against the white background.