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**CHANGING THE NIGERIA SOCIAL-CULTURAL  
NARRATIVES THROUGH SOCIAL STUDIES**

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**Abstract**

*This study examined the sociocultural context of Nigerian society now concerning the Social Studies curriculum that is taught in the nation's secondary schools. Nigeria's sociocultural environment is defined by a variety of social vices, including corruption, indecent attire, and moral degeneration, among many others. Additionally, there are instances of cultural vices such as incest, rape, bestiality, and ritualism. In light of these sociocultural narratives, the paper proposed that, with certain significant obstacles to the effective delivery of Social Studies education removed, a functional delivery of Social Studies education could effectuate the desired changes in the socio-cultural narratives of the nation. The study specifically looked at the current socio-cultural environment in Nigeria, identified some significant barriers to the effective delivery of Social Studies education there, and offered recommendations for how Social Studies education may improve the narratives. The study concluded that a well-taught Social Studies programme may significantly improve Nigeria's current sociocultural history.*

**Keywords:** Nigeria narrative, Change, Social Studies, Curriculum delivery

### **Introduction**

Teachers of the Ohio University project attempted to integrate Social Studies education into Teachers' Colleges in the erstwhile Western Region of Nigeria in 1958, marking the beginning of Social Studies education in Nigeria. The goals were to teach Nigerian students about their surroundings and help them comprehend the connections between the physical, economic, social, and cultural environments; promote peaceful coexistence; strengthen and develop their capacity for critical thought; utilise their environments for the good of humanity; and cultivate good citizenship in the students (Makinde, 1979). As a result, the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) encapsulated the goals of Social Studies in Nigeria. These goals included fostering a sense of national consciousness and unity, instilling the proper values and attitudes for both individual and societal survival, teaching students to appreciate their surroundings, and equipping them with the necessary skills and competencies to enable them to live in and contribute to their communities.

It is anticipated that Social Studies instruction will be dynamic and reflect current societal happenings. These modern occurrences touch every aspect of civilization. Among the events are the expansion of knowledge and information, social issues, criminal activity, value education, technological challenges, and political violence. As a developing nation, Nigeria faces a variety of criminal activities, including kidnappings, abductions, robberies, political violence, embezzlement by national leaders, inflating national budgets, irregular worker salary payments, the Boko Haram crisis, which has resulted in a rise in internally displaced people, and most recently, the "yahoo" scandal. When combined, these factors strengthen the value of studying current concerns in Social Studies at all educational levels in Nigeria. According to Mezieobi (2013), current Social Studies must be sensitive to the always shifting requirements of society and the ambitions of its citizens because of the dynamism of society. This viewpoint is consistent with that of Enu and Dania (1999), who saw Social

Studies instruction as a promising curriculum with the ability to transform society through its integrative qualities in the face of burgeoning crises. Osakwe (2009) asserts that teaching Social Studies should be strategically oriented towards modern concerns, which are centred around how people interact with the political, social, economic, and technical landscapes of their day.

The development of better citizenship is the main goal of Social Studies education. Students who take such a subject learn how to be responsible, patriotic citizens. In addition to helping students improve their critical thinking skills and preparing them to engage competently and productively as engaged citizens of a country, it teaches students their duties and responsibilities, particularly as they relate to social and civic issues (Jekayinfa, 2018). Actually, the main objective of Social Studies education is to help students develop and promote good citizenship. The objectives of Social Studies education are divided into six categories by academics such as Ogunbiyi and Soluade (2011): environment (total environment), knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and emergent challenges. These objectives were broken down into two distinct categories: recognising the social issues in the learners' community and coming up with solutions by raising awareness and comprehending the social and physical environment's constant change in both natural and man-made contexts. Utilising these resources collectively and sensibly for national aspirations is the ultimate goal. As a result of the aforementioned explanation, this paper looked at how Social Studies are taught in Nigeria in light of the country's narrative and the need to improve the functionality of Social Studies education for students in order to reshape the nation's social structure and alter the narrative.

### **The Nigeria Narrative**

The emphasis on riches and success in Nigerian culture today is characterised by a lack of consideration for the proper channels and methods that might be pursued to attain these goals. The degradation that is evident throughout the nation is the result of

this. These days, it seems like the pursuit of achievement drives everything in Nigeria, regardless of how it is attained. These facts are confirmed by the recently held general elections. The nation may be compared to a business enterprise where customer service is not prioritised. Many Nigerians are in it for quick money, downplaying their patriotism and good citizenship in the process. The institutional processes for accomplishing these goals and the culturally celebrated goals appear to be at odds with one another. The apparent anomie that currently permeates Nigerian society is the result of this attenuating over time. The current state of the socio-cultural environment seems depressing to young people who are determined to change the nation's socio-cultural narratives for the better.

Numerous economic, political, and social evils plague the nation, including cyber fraud, terrorism, banditry, abduction, ritualism, religious fanaticism, cultism, moral decay, embezzlement, social injustice, and corruption. It has evolved into a society in which certain despicable individuals and betrayers of public confidence are bestowed with national decorations and assigned to positions of high office. In fact, Nigeria was listed as one of the world's most corrupt nations by Transparency International in 2022. Additionally, Nigeria was placed 163rd in the Human Development Index by the United Nations (Business Day, 2021). The Human Development Index compares nations by computing detailed disparities in per capita income, life expectancy, education, and security (Shuaibu & Shaibu, 2020).

All of these have rendered the grandiose aspirations embodied in Nigeria's national objectives, as outlined in the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution, a fantasy. Nigeria's five key national objectives are to have a democratically free society, an egalitarian society, a nation united by self-reliance and unity, a progressively dynamic economy, and a nation with plenty of possibilities for its residents. Moreover, the Nigeria National Pledge, a national emblem, represents an implicit pledge of allegiance made by the populace to the nation. Citizens pledge to serve the country with all of their might and to be totally

devoted to its goals. The national promise is a symbol of a country's customs, history, and religious heritage. As a result, it makes the nation's citizens feel patriotic and serves as a reminder of their rich history. Unfortunately, when carrying out their official responsibilities, Nigerian politicians violate the pledge they took when taking office. Can teaching Social Studies alter this narrative about Nigeria?

### **Constraints of Social Studies in Nigeria**

There's no one definition of Social Studies as a human effort that is accepted by all. Various academics and authors have defined it in different ways according to how they understand the issue. This paper will focus on the similarities between these definitions rather than examining each one individually as it is outside the scope of this work. According to all of these definitions, Social Studies is an interdisciplinary synthesis of humanities and social science ideas with the goal of preparing students to be effective and useful citizens. Based on the fundamental idea of Social Studies and its previously stated purposes, the first question that springs to mind is: What has prevented Social Studies education in Nigeria from accomplishing its objectives?

The National Policy on Education, the working document that currently governs educational practises in Nigeria, was made mandatory for Social Studies in the Junior Secondary School (JSS) in the first five editions (1977–1971), and it was later revised in 1998, 2004, 2007, and 2013. Social Studies is now required at all three basic education levels – lower, middle, and upper – as a result of the introduction of the Basic Education system. Unfortunately, Social Studies was not given its own subject in the 2013 revision of the National Policy; instead, it was included as one of the four component parts of the new Religion and National Values curriculum along with civic education, security education, and religion (Christianity and Islam). The significance of Social Studies as a discipline tasked with instilling and fostering acceptable societal ideals was diminished by this review. Jekayinfa (2018) asserts that the combination of five

courses into one will undoubtedly have an impact on the curriculum's contents, instructional methodologies, required resources, classroom utilisation, teaching and learning activities, and assessment process. This is the current state of Social Studies. It seems like there is no longer any substance to the topic.

Curricular resources also seem to have a negative effect on Social Studies education in Nigeria. All educational tools, materials, and resources that are available to support teaching and learning are collectively referred to as curricula (Edinyang, 2016). Students should have easy access to and exploration of a wide range of learning-rich resources in order to guarantee a profound and significant Social Studies learning experience. Teachers and students teaching Social Studies should have access to curriculum and instructional materials such as textbooks, trade publications, and primary sources.

An important topic that is closely associated with curriculum materials is effective Social Studies pedagogy. Pupils require intentional teaching and training in inquiry to gain the necessary abilities for success in a variety of areas and in civic life. In order to establish adequate Social Studies instruction, professional and research-driven Social Studies-based inquiry skills are essential. Teachers of Social Studies across the nation appear to have embraced the conventional approach to teaching over time. It's possible that this approach won't be able to help children develop the critical thinking abilities necessary to decide intelligently about events both inside and outside of their surroundings. The students require the right knowledge and resources to help them cultivate a disciplined mindset and the critical thinking abilities they'll need to get by in life. Students should be at the core of the learning process and given chances that will help them become thoughtful and active learners. When students create numerous outcomes, set goals, and overcome obstacles, they become conscientious makers of knowledge and their future. With the use of intentional pedagogy and an inquiry-based training methodology, students will be able to comprehend Nigerian society, make informed judgements, and move through it

unaffected. It has been acknowledged by Mezeobi, Fubara & Mezieobi (2013), Osakwe (2012), Ediyang and Ipuole (2014), and others that Social Studies education in Nigerian schools has not been successful in fulfilling its intended instructional purpose. All of these limitations stem from the nation's inadequate funding of education as well as the government's lack of political will and commitment to alter the perception of Nigeria. The country's education system continues to face serious challenges as a result of decades-long inadequate funding for education. Agbai, Okafor, and Egbedoyin (2021) claim that Nigeria's educational funding over the past 20 years has fallen short of the 15%–20% standard that the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has recommended. If the nation is to use education as a tool to accomplish its goals, then adequate funding for education is required. Furthermore, the Nigerian political elite lacks a personal commitment to the country's progress and has no personal devotion, making it impossible for them to defend Nigeria's superiority over any other entity that might challenge it. The political class's governance of Nigeria lacks the unwavering dedication to the country's welfare.

### **Changing the Nigeria Socio-cultural Narrative through Social Studies**

The sociocultural milieu is mainly characterised by issues with followership and leadership, insecurity, religious intolerance, corruption, and unfavourable beliefs and attitudes. A comprehensive approach to the subject will be necessary if Social Studies education is to transform the socio-cultural narratives. The focus of the Social Studies curriculum needs to be reoriented towards addressing the current socio-cultural narratives and separated from religion and national values. Making arrangements for pertinent curriculum materials that will support efficient curriculum delivery is another aspect of this. Purposeful pedagogy and inquiry-based training should also be discussed. Teachers of Social Studies should be familiar with instructional strategies that encourage students to learn via inquiry. Education

in Social Studies should be designed to help students at all levels become change agents in the society in which they live. It should also intentionally teach and learn how to handle current national and international concerns. Additionally, current national issues should be covered in Social Studies education. Terrorism, armed robbery, hostage-taking, suicide bombing, pipeline vandalism, corruption, tribalism, and Boko Haramism are among the problems that need to be tackled because they are detrimental to the growth of the country (Jekayinfa, 2018). Furthermore, Nigeria prioritises the education sector even lower in its budget than it does in its financial efforts for education. Enhancing the present funding efforts will result in a more favourable teaching and learning environment that will boost teacher effectiveness and enable the delivery of the Social Studies curriculum. Furthermore, the Nigerian political elite must be dedicated to the Nigerian path and recognise the critical role that nationalism and patriotism play in governance. Nigeria's best interests must always come first. Responsible citizenship, after all, is essentially about patriotism and national consciousness; it is a relationship between a person and a state to which the person owes allegiance and is therefore entitled to its protection. It entails individuals cooperating to positively impact their local, national, and international communities.

### **Conclusion**

When implemented effectively in Nigerian schools, Social Studies instruction has the power to positively alter the current sociocultural narrative of the nation. The problem of curricula resources must be resolved in order to provide Social Studies education in a proper manner. The curriculum delivery method requires the adoption of a more intentional pedagogy and inquiry training approach. This will require support in the form of an engaging learning environment that encourages critical thinking in the student. Additionally, as stated in the National Policy on Education, 2013, Social Studies should remain a separate subject and not be combined with Religion and National Values. All things



considered, the government must adequately support education, show physical commitment, and have the political will to alter Nigeria's current sociocultural narrative. The social, economic, and political advantages of a well-executed Social Studies curriculum are incalculable and too numerous to list, but it is sufficient to say that these advantages have the power to constructively rewrite the socio-cultural narrative of the community. Additionally, learning Social Studies fosters the ideal ideals and attitudes that students need to survive in the globalised information economy.

### **Suggestions**

In light of the concerns brought up in the paper, the author makes the following recommendation: curriculum specialists and Social Studies educators should revamp the current curriculum in order to better integrate it with Nigeria's contemporary sociocultural reality. Recommendations for intentional pedagogy for the efficient delivery of the curriculum should also be part of the redesign. Teachers of Social Studies should make an effort to argue why Social Studies should remain a separate subject and not be combined with religion or national values. This is essential since Social Studies covers more ground than only religion and national ideals. Finally, the government ought to make an effort to adequately finance education and show that it is committed to high-quality education. After all, the very government designated education as the ideal tool for the advancement of the country.

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