

**THE DISMEMBERED SOCIAL STUDIES IN NIGERIA:
PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS IN
RIVERS STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the opinions of Social Studies and Civic Education secondary school teachers in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State on the dismembering of Social Studies. Four research questions guided the study and descriptive survey design was adopted. All the 39 teachers teaching Social Studies and Civic Education from the total population of 686 teachers from the 15 secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis participated in the study. A structured questionnaire tagged; "Teacher's Opinion on Social Studies as a school subject" (TOSSSS) with a reliability index of 0.89, obtained using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Formular (r) was used for data collection. The instrument was properly validated using face and content validation method. Percentages were used to answer the research questions. Some findings that emerged from the study are; Social Studies teachers believed that Civic Education is part of Social Studies taught at Basic and the Civic Education taught at the senior secondary; the gap between the Basic Education and Tertiary Education is because of the non-implementation of Social

Studies at the Senior Secondary level; Social Studies Educationist Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) should be actively involved in the development and revision of Social Studies programme. The study recommended among other things that the communique of the 36th Annual conference of Social Studies Educationist Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) should be approved and implemented.

Keywords: *Social Studies Curriculum, Social Studies Teachers, Perception,*

Introduction

Social Studies as a school subject is more than just teaching facts and dates to students, it is about teaching them the “why” behind each individual’s choices, their interactions with each other and the environment. Social Studies also has the ability to effectively tap into the whole student. It challenges them logically and tasks them to reason and think while linking with them emotionally as they learn about the elations and slumps of the human experience. Social Studies also can be the portal to better learning in other subjects. That is why Social Studies content is designed with an integrated learning approach.

Social Studies is one of the most misconceived and unappreciated subjects in Nigeria, this is very obvious the way the subject is being treated, this is very unfortunate. The main aim of Social Studies curriculum is to produce graduates who have the knowledge, skills, and competencies to be active and informed citizens, who understands the historical, geographical, political, economic, and societal concepts, and how these relate to and interact with each other. It is difficult for students to gain this understanding through a broad survey of topics and or by receiving knowledge from scholarly sources. According to Todd (2015) they should be able to build deep understandings and develop their own knowledge through investigations into interesting, open-ended questions, debating and discussing historical and contemporary issues, and developing and

supporting their own hypotheses, solutions, and conclusions. This can only be achieved through an integrated approach. Social Studies assist students to build those understandings and knowledge. It draws on topics from disciplines within the humanities and social sciences, history, geography, political science, and economics, with contributions from other disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology. The focus being to integrate these disciplines on human activities, behaviours, and interactions with both other humans and the environment (Cox, 2017)

All these aspirations of Social Studies notwithstanding is faced with challenges, such as, the dynamics of the society, politicization of curricular by allied social science specialist and teachers' effectiveness among other things. The challenges are especially more in this 21st century with its wave of curriculum reforms in Nigeria, the core area of Social Studies has been dismembered to produce civics, family life education and religion and national values and I don't see it stopping there.

Teachers' factor is critical to a successful curriculum delivery in schools. Effective teaching is a factor of such variables like good content delivery, good choice of teaching method, efficient evaluation skills etc. Several indices are used to measure the quality of a teacher. Each teacher quality index provides a single measure of teacher quality based on a larger number of teacher quality measures, such as teacher experience, certification status, academic ability and even stability at school. (Johnson, Kahle & Cargo, 2007) Although there is ongoing debate about whether objective measures of teacher quality (such as experience, certification status, quality of the preparation and teacher stability) accurately identify teacher effectiveness in improving student achievement, recent research has found statistically significant relationships between these objective measures of quality and gains in student achievement (Johnson, Kahle & Cargo, 2007)

Teaching is a career that provides challenges, excitement, personal reward and chance to encourage and support others to achieve their goals (Johnson, Kahle & Fargo, 2007). Teachers acquire skills such as strong knowledge in specific subject areas,

patience, good sense of humour, classroom management etc through the rigorous training they go through during their pre-service training. These skills are fundamental in ensuring a permanent change in pupils' behaviour. Another important area of effective teaching and learning process is teachers' perception. According to the theory of perception by Gregory (1972) Perception is a constructive process which relies on top-down. It is a hypothesis, which is based on prior knowledge, in that way one is actively constructing his perception of reality based on his environment and stored information.

Perception when it come to teaching and learning according to studies show that it has much influence on teaching and learning. Chandler (2005) for example found out that factors that influence teachers' acceptance or rejection of an idea include perception of relevance and self-interest. Also, Brown (1992) believed, teachers' perception about their subject has great influence on their teaching both positively and negatively. Partaking in this same view, Akinlaye (2002) shared that what teachers believe to be good instructional content to teach and good teaching methods to use in the classroom are immensely influenced by teachers' perception of the subject.

Almarza (2001), Chiodo and Byford (2004) carried out studies which shows that the teachers are the key to what Social Studies means to students, because teachers' understanding of the subject affect the way they teach and transmit knowledge to students. Evans (2004) and Todd (2015) in their studies revealed that the decisions of what to teach our children under Social Studies education most times shift because of the influence of the perception of the teacher about the subject.

This implies that teachers' curriculum conception will probably influence the way an educational package is delivered to students with the aim of fulfilling individual and societal goals. Teachers' beliefs and conceptions greatly influence their instructional decisions in the classroom and they also hold the key to the sound educational system of any nation. As a result of this, teacher's educational standard, their quality and competencies and most importantly their conception of a subject should be of a high priority.

The general purpose of this study, therefore, is to find out the perception of secondary school teachers teaching Social Studies and Civic Education in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State on the dismembering of Social Studies. Specifically, the study seeks to find out the following; the Social Studies and Civic education teacher's educational qualifications ; teacher's perception of the impact of the fragmentation of Social Studies on the realization of Social Studies aim and goals as stipulated in the National Policy on Education; If Social Studies is being taught in the schools or Religion and National Values Education (RNVE) or National Values Education (NVE) (in full for the first appearance) ; the qualifications and areas of specialization of the teachers teaching Social Studies and Civic Education among other things.

Research Questions

- i. What are the teachers' perceptions on the dismembering of Social Studies?
- ii. Is RNV or NVE or Social Studies being taught in the schools?
- iii. What are the qualifications and areas of specialization of teachers teaching Social Studies and Civics?

Methods

Descriptive survey design was used for this study which sought to ascertain, among other things the perception of secondary school teachers teaching Social Studies and Civic Education in Port Harcourt Metropolis on the dismembering of Social Studies. The population of the study consisted of the 39 Social Studies and Civic Education teachers in the 15 secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis. A questionnaire titled "Teachers Opinion on Social Studies as a School Subject" was used to collect data for the study. It was designed by the researcher. It had two sections, A and B. Section A was designed to cover demographic variables such as: sex, educational qualification and specialization, years of experience, name of schools, and so on, while section B was designed to determine their perceptions. The researcher validated the questionnaire using face and content validity. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was applied to determine

the measure of accurate consistency. This gave a coefficient of 0.78. The researcher with the help of her colleagues and her students on teaching practice exercise distributed the questionnaire to the respondents, a total of 39 questionnaires were distributed, 35 was returned but only 27 were filled correctly. Information gathered from them were decoded and tallied, and the frequency counts determined. Percentage scores were computed.

Results

RQ1. What are the teachers' perceptions on the dismembering of Social Studies?

Table 1: Opinion of teachers on the dismembered Social Studies

S/N	Perception of teachers on the dismembered Social Studies	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1	Civic Education taught at senior secondary is part of Social Studies	61	20	12	7
2	Civic Education focused more on Political Education instead of Value Education	46	22	12	10
3	The gap between basic and tertiary education exists because of the non-implementation of Social Studies at the senior secondary school level	44	24	21	13
4	Only curriculum of Social Studies education programmes at the tertiary prepares pre-service teachers to teach the Values and the Civic Education at schools.	31	28	20	14
5	There should be a synergy between teachers' preparation and classroom practice.	63	25	20	3
6	Social Studies, Civics and Security education called National Values Education have overlapping contents.	65	16	12	7
7	The overlapping content leads to boredom because of repetition.	44	20	22	14
8	There should be a synergy between teachers' preparation and classroom practice.	48	30	18	5
9	Social Studies, Civics and Security education called National Values Education have overlapping contents.	53	28	9	10
10	The overlapping content leads to boredom because of repetition.	31	33	21	15
11	Nigerian youth will develop adequate skills and values under Social Studies curriculum than National Values Education at the basic and Civic Education at the SSS.	45	20	19	18
12	Social Studies should be returned to the school curriculum as a holistic and integrated subject.	66	12	16	10
13	Social Studies should replace Civic Education at the Senior Secondary.	41	11	28	20
14	SOSAN should be actively involved in further development and revision of Social Studies programme.	42	34	14	10

On the opinion of teachers on the dismembering of Social Studies; the first item was if Civic Education taught at senior secondary is part of Social Studies; 81% of the teachers believed that Civic Education taught at SS level is part of Social Studies while 19% disagreed. The second item on the focus of Civic Education, 68% of the teachers believed that Civic Education focused more on Political Education instead of Value Education, while 32% believed that the focus is on Value Education more than Political Education. On the implication of non-implementation of Social Studies at the senior secondary, 68% agreed that the gap between basic and tertiary education exist because of the non-implementation of Social Studies at the senior secondary school level while 34% of them disagreed.

About Social Studies Curriculum at the tertiary, 59% believed that only curriculum of Social Studies education programmes at the tertiary prepares pre-service teachers to teach the Values and the Civic Education at schools while 34% was of a contrary opinion, on the other hand 78% agreed that there should be a synergy between teachers' preparation and classroom practice, 23% disagreed. 81% of the teachers agreed that Social Studies, Civics and Security education called National Values Education have overlapping contents while 19% disagreed. On whether the overlapping content leads to boredom because of repetition 64% agreed while 36% disagreed.

The item on whether Nigerian youth will develop adequate skills and values under Social Studies curriculum than National Values Education at the basic and Civic Education at the SSS, 65% agreed while 37% disagreed, 78% agreed that Social Studies should be returned to the school curriculum as a holistic and integrated subject and 26% disagreed. On the issue of replacing Civic Education at the Senior secondary with Social Studies 52% said yes while 48% said No. Again, 76% of the teachers agreed that SOSAN should be actively involved in further development and revision of Social Studies programme but 24% of them disagreed.

RQ 2. What is being taught in Rivers State Schools, Religious and National Values (RNV), National Values Education (NVE) or Social Studies?

Table 2: Teaching of Religious and National Values (RNV), National Values Education (NVE) or Social Studies in Rivers State Schools

No of Schools	Social Studies	Religious and National Values	National Values Education
15	15 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Table 2 indicates that all the schools under study teach Social Studies at the Basic Level.

RQ 3. What are the qualifications and areas of specialization of teachers teaching Social Studies and Civics?

Table 3: Qualifications and Specialization of the teachers teaching Social Studies and Civics

1	Qualification of Teachers teaching Social Studies	NCE	BEd	MEd	PhD	
		10%	70%	20%	0%	
2	Area of Specialization of Teachers teaching Social Studies	Social Studies	Economics	Biology	Accounting	Refused to Indicate
		19%	8%	7%	7%	59%

On the issue of qualifications of teachers teaching Social Studies and civics the study showed that, 10% has NCE, 70% has B.Ed. while 20% has M.Ed. But for their Area of specialization of the teachers teaching Social Studies and Civic Education those whose specialization is in Social Studies is 19%, Biology is 7%, Economics is 8%, Accounting is 7%, while teachers that refused to indicate their areas of specialization is 59%. All the sampled schools are

teaching Social Studies at the basic and Civic Education at the Senior secondary.

Discussions

The findings of this study revealed that Social Studies teachers believe that Social Studies is being dismembered and there are consequences, they affirmed that Civic Education is part of Social Studies and that Values Education taught in schools focused more on Political Education instead of Values Education

The study revealed that they believed that the gap between the Basic Education and Tertiary Education is because of the non-implementation of Social Studies at the Senior Secondary level, and that only Social Studies curriculum at the tertiary prepares pre- service teachers to teach Civic Education and Values Education in schools. . But we will not ignore the fact that even though more percentage of the teachers are of these opinions, still some of the teachers had a contrary opinions, this is not surprising though since a good percentage of the teachers teaching these subjects are not Social Studies specialist.

These findings corroborate with the first four items of the 36th SOSAN National Conference Communique. They are also in agreement with the findings of Cox (2017) that confirmed that lack of teaching of values by Social Studies teachers led to negative effects on students. Also, they are in agreement with the findings of Akire (2010) which agreed that Social Studies is an avenue for moral and value education among students in Nigeria hence should be properly taught in that direction.

The study also revealed that the teachers agreed to the fact that Nigerian youths will develop adequate skills and values under Social Studies curriculum than National Values Education at the Basic and Civic Education at the Senior Secondary. This is in agreement with the findings of Okam (2011) that emphasized the vital role of Social Studies as an instrument for preparing and mobilizing young learners in schools for the purpose of enabling them cultivate an awareness and understanding that would transform them into citizens with skills that will help them

contribute positively to economic, social, political and cultural development of their societies.

The results also revealed that the teachers want Social Studies to be returned to the schools as a holistic and integrated subject and that Civic Education at the Senior secondary should be replaced with Social Studies. It was also confirmed that the content of the National Values Education curriculum is overlapping and when topics are repeated over and over, it becomes boring, attention is lost and learning becomes difficult.

The study also tried to find out the qualifications and areas of specialisation of the teachers teaching Social Studies and Civic Education, It was observed that a good number of the teachers are B.Ed. holders with a few of them with M.Ed, only a few of them are actually graduates of Social Studies. Non-professionals are the ones teaching Social Studies in our schools which has resulted in the faulty implementation of the subject with the resultant effect of non-achievement of its aim and objectives, this is in corroboration with many studies and many authors opinions (Ezegbe & Okam 2013, Esu & Enu 2010, Ogunyemi, 2014) that one of the major challenges of Social Studies in Nigeria is the fact that non-Social Studies professionals are the ones teaching Social Studies in our schools.

All the schools under study are teaching Social Studies at the basic and Civic education at the Senior secondary as revealed by the findings. This is a very good news that all the secondary schools studied teach Social Studies at the basic level, though only the sampled school were studied but casual observation revealed that all the public schools in most of the Local Governments in Rivers State teach Social Studies at the Basic level.

It is worth note taking that even though majority of the teachers' opinion was that the dismembered Social Studies is harmful to the society when we go through their responses on each of the items seeking their perception, small proportion of the teachers believed otherwise, these are most likely the non-Social Studies professionals teaching the subject that were

uncomfortable with the questions because of the revelations of facts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the author therefore recommends that the communique of the 36th Annual conference of Social Studies Educationist Association on Nigeria (SOSAN) which in summary suggested a revision of Social Studies curriculum by relevant bodies in collaboration with experts in Social Studies should be approved and implemented. Also, Social Studies should be returned as a school subject both at the Basic and at the Senior Secondary level, Social Studies Educationist Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) should be involved in everything that concern Social Studies Education and Social Studies and Civic Education should be taught by only Social Studies professionals

Conclusion

A multidisciplinary and integrated subject like Social Studies which covers broad areas of human knowledge cannot be tossed up and around continuously by the innovation in the National Policy on Education. The subject of Social Studies education is about man, all facets of knowledge revolve around man. Social Studies education is the only subject which maintains its potency despite rapid changes in science, technology and information. Because of this among other things it should be accorded its rightful position in the Nigeria's educational system. This study focused on only government schools in one Local Government Area in Rivers State. It is my desire to extend this study to more Local Government Areas and also include private secondary schools in Rivers State because on a casual observation, some private schools in Rivers State and some public schools in some Local Government Areas teach Religious and National Values Education (RNVE) or National Values Education (NVE) or Social Studies, which means that there is no uniformity.

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