

Toward Building a Solid Foundation for Social Science Education in Nigerian Educational System: A New Approach to Functional Citizenship Education

S. A. Garba, T. K. R. Singh, N. B. M. Yusuf, and A. F. Saad

Abstract—The national philosophy of education in Nigeria recognises the need for social science knowledge in building the desired social orientation needed after independence in mobilising the young citizens for national development. But, the provision for teaching and learning the social science subject disciplines is made only for senior secondary schools and institutions of higher learning; because, learning the curriculum content of the social sciences in the real context of the subject disciplines that make up the social sciences is beyond the grips of the child in primary and junior secondary schools. However, the National Policy on Education emphasises the need for teaching and learning in primary and junior secondary schools to be directed toward building the foundation for senior secondary and higher education. Thus, as did the USA, the teaching of social studies education in Nigerian schools at these levels is meant to lay a foundation for the learning and use of social science knowledge in developing the desired citizenship for national development. But, unlike the USA, this approach seems to yield very little success in the context of Nigeria. This paper examines issues relating to the seeming failure of social studies education as a foundation for social science education in building the desired responsible citizenship.

Index Terms—Social science education, social studies education, functional citizenship education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Even with the attainment of political independence in 1960, the feelings of being a British Colony has continue to reflect in the thought, behaviour and actions of Nigerians in all aspects of life [1], [2]. As such, looking at the new (native) leaders of the new born nation most of whom were former employees of the colonial masters gave most Nigerians the feelings that; 'independence' is just a mere transition from serving white colonial masters to serving new breed of colonial masters. This time around, 'masters' with black skin from the African race aided to power by the colonialist, feudal lords and traditional rulers. Thus, dealing with this colonial mentality is one of the major socio-political challenges that confronted the new political elites at the attainment of independence [3]. This colonial orientation needs to be eradicated if Nigerians are to be mobilised as citizens towards the building of their state as geo-political entity in the midst of other states within the international community [4].

Decolonising the people and institutions was therefore a necessary task for the new government (of the natives). To

achieve this, well-informed stakeholders of the new born nation consider education as a viable instrument not only for the development of new social orientation, but the overall development of individuals and society [5], [6]. This consideration was influenced by the active role played by the Nigerian social scientist in mobilising people towards the nationalist struggle for political independence that yielded success in 1960 [6]. However, utilising education for this purpose requires the decolonisation of the education industry itself [7], [8]. To do this, the first post-colonial national education summit was organised at Ibadan in 1969 to restructure the education industry and educational practices toward the developmental needs of the Nigerian communities [9]. At the summit, the following beliefs and philosophy were adopted as the guiding principles of education in independent Nigeria:

- 1) Sound knowledge of social science education is critically needed in transforming the social orientation of Nigerians; and, in decolonising the socio-economic and political institutions [5];
- 2) Knowledge of science and technology need to be promoted for the overall benefits of all sectors in the Nigerian society [8];
- 3) Law and humanities for the development of just and egalitarian society.

Consequent of this summit, professional educators and other stakeholders of the education industry were to put to task in the national curriculum conference to come up with a new educational structure and curriculum that would reflect the belief and philosophy earlier adopted [5], [10]. The new structure and curriculum that emerged from the conference that was later endorsed as the first National Policy on Education in the 1970's suggest among other things:

- 1) The teaching of history, economics and geography as core and compulsory subjects for senior students (forms 4 and 5) in teacher training colleges; and for Arts students (forms 4 and 5) in secondary schools (now senior secondary schools 1-3);
- 2) The teaching of chemistry physics and biology as core and compulsory subjects for senior students (forms 4 and 5) in secondary schools; and, integrated science and biology for teachers colleges;
- 3) In primary and junior secondary classes (1-3), teaching and learning the following subjects is compulsory for all pupils and students: Maths; English; Primary Science (for primary schools) and integrated science (for junior secondary schools); Crafts; Fine Art; Physical and Health Education; Religion; and, one of the three Nigerian major languages (Hausa, Yoruba or Igbo).

The philosophical basis of teaching 'mathematics' at these levels is to lay a foundation for engineering; 'Primary

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S. A. Garba is currently with the USM. (e-mail: sanialhajigarba@yahoo.com)

Science/Integrated Science' to lay the foundation of Science and Technology Education; 'Craft' for laying the foundation of Technical Education; 'Physical and Health Education' as foundation for Health and Medical Sciences; while religion and language is to build the foundation for Law and Humanities [11], [12]. A critical look at this philosophical structure and framework shows that, provision to lay a foundation for social science education is lacking at these levels of learning [13]. To bridge this critical gap, the conference committee on primary and junior secondary education suggest the teaching of social studies education as the foundation for social science education at the said levels as did the United States of America [10]. The teaching of social studies education in the United States has to a reasonable degree served its purpose; but teaching the subject in Nigeria has not recorded much success. What is responsible for this lack of success in Nigeria?why? This study explores to answer these questions and suggest possible ways out of the failing situation.

II. SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AS A FOUNDATIONAL BASE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE KNOWLEDGE IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

Social studies education is an eclectic distillation of many disciplines [5]. As a subject discipline in Nigerian schools, social studies education draws its learning contents from a wide variety of sources mostly the social sciences, natural and applied sciences, arts, law and humanities. The curriculum design of the subject is meant to integrate knowledge drawn from these sources in helping the school child to have holistic understanding of man's existence and interaction with the natural and social environments [14], [15]. This is considered necessary in the social education of the young. The basic goal of this subject design is that of preparing the school child for full responsible citizenship through practical utilisation of knowledge drawn from a variety of sources in the social sciences [16], [5]. Towards achieving this basic goal, the subject is design to:

- 1) provides insights into the use of various knowledge structure and procedure from the social sciences that has relevance in modern civilisations;
- 2) be concerned with fostering (students) better understanding of the movements, events and personalities that have influence the history of their immediate environment and the wider world as a global community;
- 3) Foster and improve human relations through a better understanding of others within the immediate environment and beyond [17].

In Nigerian context, the goals of social studies curriculum design is tied down to building a sound and balanced mind as a foundation for functional social science education directed towards the development of intelligent, responsible and self-directing citizen [5]. To do this, the sources of knowledge structure in social studies curriculum design is drawn mainly from the social sciences; though, with an orientation that differs from the individual subject disciplines of the social sciences [18]. As a foundational

base for the social sciences, social studies education provides a broader curriculum framework that fuse scientific knowledge with ethical, philosophical, religious and social considerations considered as issues that naturally arises in the process of decision-making as practiced by citizens [5]. Because of this consideration, social studies education employs the use of such concepts as: rationality, tolerance, sympathy, honesty, empathy, respect for others, needs and interest, morality, inter-dependence, cooperation, adaptation, patriotism, values, progress and democracy. The various forms of thought and reasoning represented in these concepts vary among the individual subjects disciplines of the social sciences. The instructional framework of social studies education is therefore associated with the expanded meaning and knowledge of the interconnections and interrelationships of these concepts [5], [19].

The subject design provides a base for multi-disciplinary study of issues and problems in society for the purpose of problem-solving [20], [5]. Curriculum developments in social studies is therefore aimed (among others) at a universe of inter-disciplinary inquiry, discourse and understanding among the young citizens of different background and aspirations, who as citizens would have to share some responsibilities and problems [5], [19].

III. THE OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

Integrating and dispensing social science knowledge through the instrumentality of social studies curriculum design in Nigerian schools is directed towards the following objectives; these are considered necessary for sound social science education and functional citizenship education. The objectives are meant to encourage and develop:

- 1) Self-confidence and initiatives;
- 2) Power of imagination and resourcefulness;
- 3) Desire for knowledge and continued learning;
- 4) Sense of compassion for the less fortunate;
- 5) Sense of respect for and tolerance of the opinion of others;
- 6) Social values and attitudes such as: cooperation; participation; interdependence; open-mindedness; honesty; integrity; trustworthiness; diligence and obedience.
- 7) A spirit of national consciousness and patriotism [16], [17], [5].

Collectively, these objectives aimed at producing well informed citizens capable of utilising social science knowledge in problem-solving and meaningful contribution to national development; and toward the building a just and egalitarian society as envisaged in the National Policy on Education [12]-[17]. At this level, social studies education may not necessarily be concerned with the development and propagation of knowledge but the utilisation of social science knowledge in understanding man's inter-relation with the natural and social environment; problem-solving through various thought processes associated with decision-making; and, building social attitudes and values for collective living. The above objectives are expected to be achieved by integrating social science knowledge into a

singular curricular framework in providing a holistic view of human existence through the instrumentality of social studies curricular design.

IV. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM DESIGN

Effective classroom execution of the conceptual framework for social studies curriculum design is meant to assist the school child in cultivating the virtues that would transform them into citizens with the needed: skills, competencies, attitudes, moral values and reasoned judgement to effectively live, interact, interrelate and contribute positively to the economic, social and political development of the Nigerian society [13]. This can create a strong base for the development of attitudes favourable for sound social development [14], [8]. Thus, as pictured in figure 1 below, the curriculum content of social studies education are selected and drawn from the social sciences. But the selected contents are not in any way taught in the context of the social science disciplines; instead, they are integrated into a single curriculum design to develop multi-

disciplinary approach in the study of man and society. Integrating the social science knowledge through the social studies framework is therefore meant to assist the child in developing a holistic picture of man in relation to the environment; and, in viewing issues from multiple dimensions. The framework exposes the learner toward acquiring the skills and competences of adopting the strategy of multi-disciplinary approach to studying issues; and, inter-disciplinary approach to problem-solving.

Thus, instead of looking at issues from a single discipline approach as done in each of the social science disciplines; issues are viewed from all the subject disciplines in the social sciences. The framework of social studies education is therefore instrumental in helping the child to build an appreciation for the contributions of each discipline in addressing the social problems of man and society. The focus of instructions in social studies education is to be directed toward socio-economic issues; socio-political issues; socio-cultural development; moral and spiritual development for the overall development of man and society.

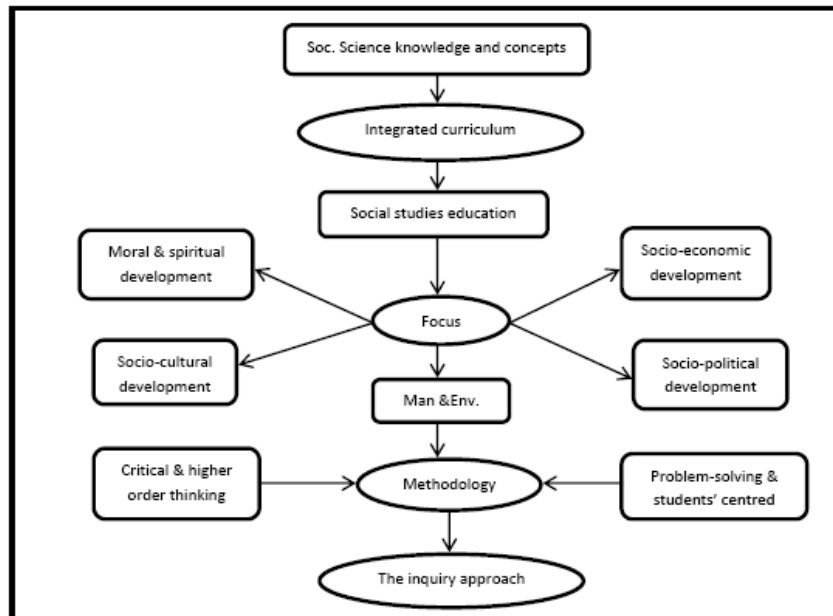


Fig.1. The conceptual framework of social studies curriculum design in Nigerian schools. [21].

The success of this curriculum design is dependent on teachers' expertise, professional competence and commitment to the ideals and structural goals of the subject design. Unfortunately, attaining the goals and objectives of social studies education in Nigerian schools has remain a mirage over the years of its existence as a subject discipline; Largely because most of the teachers employs the single subject approach in pedagogical practices and instructional evaluation [8]. This approach is an indication that "many of the teachers were yet to come to grips with the epistemological demands of the subject" [5]. At inception, teachers with professional training in handling the complexity of the new curriculum design were lacking and assigning the teaching of the subject to history and geography teachers as alternative has not done any good towards meeting the instructional objectives of the subject

Consequent of this situation, social studies education as a new curriculum design in Nigerian schools has not done much in encouraging and developing the 'needed social orientations' for youngsters with particular reference to Nigeria as 'democracy' [22]. The implication for this failure is that, we are not succeeding in building the desired foundation for functional use of the social science knowledge in forging a coercive society that support the notion of nation-building among the young citizens. The National Policy on Education too is failing in building the envisaged social framework through the instrumentality of education for dealing with the social problems that hinges on the growth and development of post-colonial Nigeria. Saving this failing situation requires social studies teacher educators to expose social studies pre-service teachers to the

proper pedagogical approaches needed in handling the technicalities involve in effective classroom instructions using available instructional technology provided by the ICT age.

V. TOWARD FUNCTIONAL SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONS

Social studies service and pre-service teachers need to know that effective classroom instruction for social studies has to go beyond mere 'giving' of information or knowledge with seated students as passive listeners. A lot is needed and required in planning a successful classroom

instruction for social studies education. Instructions in social studies education needs to strike a balance between all the learning domains. To do this, the teacher need to integrate and apply his professional knowledge and competence (PKC) with societal knowledge (SL) and operations in planning an instruction that would involve 'giving', 'prompting' and 'making' (GPM model) using the inquiry approach [23]. This approach would help the teacher in designing classroom instructions that meet the expectations intrinsic in the subject design that has to be activity oriented [5]; student centred [24]; thought provoking [8]; and, problem-solving directed. This is depicted in the suggested model below.

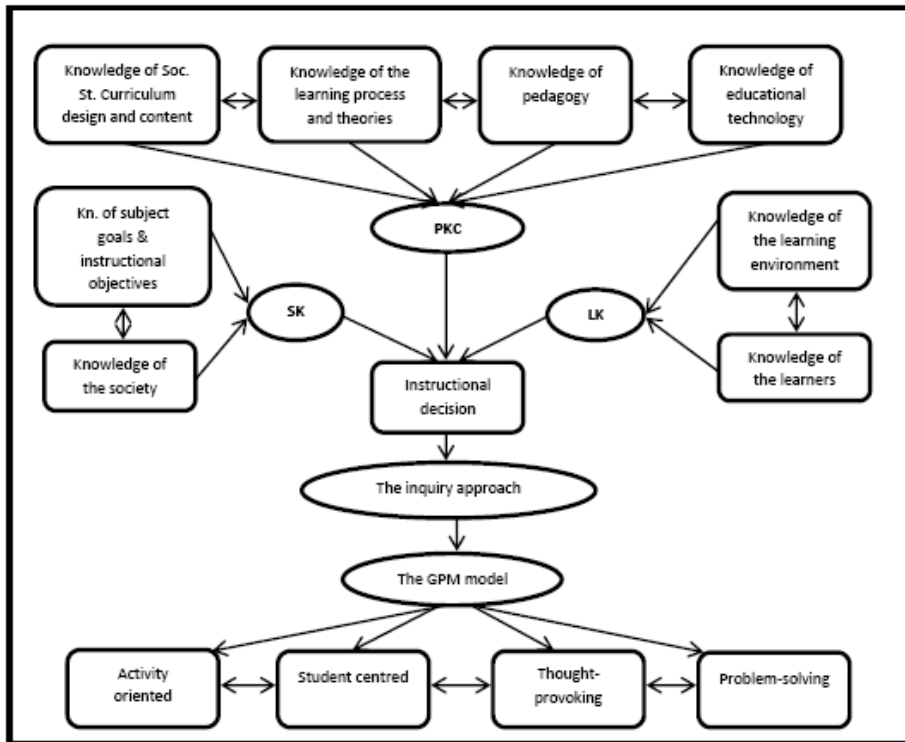


Fig.2. Decision-making model for classroom instructions in social studies education

For decision making in designing social studies instructions, the social studies teacher needs to integrate and apply his: professional knowledge and competence (PKC) with his knowledge of society (SK) and knowledge of the learners (LK) in designing the instruction. The PKC implies a professional consideration of: social studies Curriculum design and content; learning process and theories; pedagogy and knowledge of educational technology. The SK on the other hand implies the consideration of the subject goals and instructional objectives that has to be link to societal needs and interest; while the LK has to do with the consideration of the learning environment and the learners' characteristics. These considerations needs to be directed toward designing an inquiry based instruction using the appropriate technology in 'giving' (telling it straight); 'prompting' (raising the students curiosity); an, 'making' (engaging the students in problem-solving activity requiring higher order thinking).

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Attaining the goals of social studies instruction as a

foundation for the utilisation of social science education in building the desired citizen is critical to the socio-economic, political and overall development of the Nigerian society. Allowing the failure of the subject design in the Nigerian education system would have far reaching implications on the nation's National Policy on Education. Though, very little success was recorded over time. The success and failure of the subject design in Nigeria largely hinges on teacher factor. Therefore, the teacher training institutions needs to leave up-to-expectation in providing the expected training needed for successful implementation of the social studies framework in schools. Periodic in-service training, workshops and seminars need to be regular for the purpose of exposing teachers to the use of emerging technologies in teaching and learning social studies education. Teachers need to be more creative and innovative in designing and handling social studies instructions. The use of the instructional decision-making model suggested above (figure 2) would be useful to teachers in designing instructions that would be all embracing of: students' centred instruction; activity oriented instruction; thought provoking; and, problem-solving directed.

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The first author, **S. A. Garba** was born on the 10th of August, 1973 in Kafanchan, Kaduna State, Nigeria. Garba had his primary and secondary education in Kafanchan, Kaduna State, Nigeria; and, obtained the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE History/Hausa) from Kaduna State College of Education GidanWaya in 1994; Bachelor Degree in Education (B.ed Social Studies Education) from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria in 1997; Master of Education Social Studies (M. ED) from University of Jos, Nigeria in 2009; Currently, a P HD candidate (computer assisted instruction), in the Department of Educational Technology, School of Educational Studies, UniversitiSains Malaysia. He had his one year compulsory National Youth Service Corps experience in Ondo State, Nigeria in 1998. He worked as a LECTURER in social studies department, Kaduna State College of Education GidanWaya, Kafanchan, Nigeria from 2001-2005; and, worked as a LECTURER in school of education, Federal College of Education Katsina, Nigeria from 2005 to 2010. He is currently a USM P hD Research Fellow. His current research interest is on social studies pedagogy and ICT integration in social studies education.

Mr.Sani Alhaji Garba is a registered member of Nigerian Teachers Registration Council; member of Social Studies Association of Nigeria; and a member of Nigerian Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU). SaniAhajiGarba was awarded the best all round student in the school of arts and social sciences Kaduna State College of Education GidanWaya, Nigeria in 1994; and was awarded the Ondo State NYSC Honours Award in 1998.



The second author, **T. K. R. Singh** is a member of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE);Dr T. K. R. Singh is a Senior lecturer in the School of Educational Studies, UniversitiSains Malaysia, with areas of interest in Instructional Technology, Instructional Design, Training and Human Performance, ICT in Education, Teaching Methods Of Economy And Commerce. Dr Termit has expert Linkages

apart from with NCIA, also with UNESCO Bangkok and SMART Technology Education, EP-Tech Solutions Sdn. Bhd. Apart from that, she has also been actively involved in consultancy on Staff Training with some local organizations in Penang. DrTermit has more than 15years of teaching experience in not only Malaysia but also Australia and China and has conducted workshops, both locally and internationally. Her passion in wanting to make change happen in classrooms has geared her towards doing research in using ICT tools in teaching and learning. Apart from publications in local and International journals, she has also written books, a user manual for SmartBoards and teaching modules.



The third author, **N. B. M. Yusuf** is born in Kedah, Malaysia on the 02/12/1960 and obtained the B.A. (Hons) in Social Studies at the Universiti of Malaya in 1982. Further studies in Sociology of Education and obtained PhD in 2005 at UniversitiSains Malaysia, Penang.

She is currently a Senior Lecturer at the School of Educational Studies, UniversitiSains Malaysia,

Penang.Have attended many conferences pertaining to Social Interaction among students of Various Ethnicities in Malaysia

DrNajeemah is a member of The Muslim Female Group, St Johns Ambulance Malaysia, NGO and Consultant for the Social Society in Malaysia.



The fourth author, **A. F. Saad** was born in Madinah, Saudi Arabia on the 25th of March, 1982. Saad had his primary and secondary education in Madina Saudi Arabia. Mr. A. F. Saad obtained his first Degree in Imam Mohammed Bin Saud University, Al-Qassim, Saudi Arabia; Masters in Educational Administration (MED) from Yarmouk University in Jordan T and is currently a PhD candidate in School of Educational Studies, UniversitiSains Malaysia.