

Exploring the language of social studies education for a rationalization of classroom instructions in basic education in Nigeria.

By

Professor C. C. Okam
Department of Education
Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina
clementc.okam@yahoo.com

Abstract

As a curriculum programme, social studies education has become constituted into one of the importantly embedded features of the Nigerian educational system. A major critical pivot of its pedagogical assets hinges on the perspective that its curriculum dimensions and under-pinnings imply that the subject itself is submerged in immense integrative, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary commitments which derive from the complex language structures enshrined in its curriculum framework. This frame of thought does not only evoke a notion of curriculum integration but also calls for a sound knowledge of the linguistic implications necessary for coping with the complex methodological dimensions and demands needed for addressing and resolving pedagogical issues and problems of Nigeria's basic education in the frameworks of our primary and junior secondary schools. The language dimensions of the curriculum imperatives of social studies education essentially bear on the view that it is characterized by a variety of human resources and capacity-building potentialities which are intrinsic in its pedagogical designs; the language rationalization of these curriculum structures could be explored and capitalized by the professional social studies teacher to make the demands of basic education meaningful to young children. He has an uphill task to encounter and overcome if he is to achieve some good measure of success. In particular, he has to display a mastery of the knowledge of the language dimensions of the epistemology and ontological imperatives of basic education through the social studies curriculum in achieving this directive; the directive, however, must necessarily derive not so much from this teacher's subject matter knowledge background but rather from his rational application of methodologies, principles and styles of classroom pedagogy which can contribute significantly in bringing about innovations which are rooted in curriculum interdisciplining and curriculum integration by the way of the language "interconnectivity" enshrined in social studies education. This line of thought represents a kind of panacea which could be explored and employed by the social studies teacher for the purpose of capitalizing on the assets intrinsic in basic education in enhancing the creative capabilities and powers of young persons in the arduous task of nation-building within the framework of Nigeria's primary and secondary schools.

Introduction

One of the developments associated with the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2008) is the pride of place it has given to social studies. The Policy regards social studies as a core subject area which all pupils in the primary and junior secondary schools cannot dispense with in their learning activities. It is, perhaps, a recognition of the potentialities of social studies for inculcating the right type of skills and virtues through a unified, integrated and interdisciplinary studies of man, that the planners of the Policy gave it a pre-eminent place within the schools' curricular of basic education in Nigeria (2004). This exposition examines the nature and significance of the role of language in the context of social studies as an important area of study in the Nigerian basic education system. Because we have accepted the production of effective citizens through a commitment of our students to social studies, the exposition is particularly geared to a consideration of the implications arising from this new development language-wise.

The theoretical framework that forms the basis of this exposition derives from the design that Nigerian educators have accepted the basic goal of social studies instruction as that of preparing the pupil for full responsible citizenship (DuBey and Barth, 1980; Okobiah, 1985; Mezieobi, 2012; Okam, 2013). The essence of social studies programme in schools is to contribute its own quota in the social education of children. It is geared towards playing an important role in children's social growth by providing them with insights into the use of various knowledge structures and processes that have relevance in modern civilization. It is concerned with fostering better understanding of the movements, events and personalities that have influenced the history of Nigeria. It is concerned with important national issues such as the Nigerian economic system and the Nigerian environment including the influence that these exert on the lives of the Nigerian polity. It is not only concerned with the controls imposed on our lives by political institutions but also the fostering and improvement of human relations through a better understanding of others both at home and abroad. It is also devoted to the basic social institutions and the relationships of the Nigerian polity to those organised bodies that shape our behaviour in so many ways. The ultimate objective of social studies programme is the development and improvement of living generally, not merely in the classroom, but in the community, country, and in the world as a whole; such a programme has to be seen in terms of a development of intelligent, responsible and self-directing citizens.

The content of modern social studies programme is drawn from a wide variety of sources, especially from the social science disciplines. The organisation and methods of social studies are usually in harmony with what we know about learners and the learning process. The content of the subject is expected to deal with human relationships at the level of childhood. Social studies is not primarily concerned with the expansion of the boundaries of knowledge of social relationships; however, it deals with the wide dissemination of information, the development of social and inquiry skills, and the improvements of social attitudes and behaviour. Although it draws materials from the various social sciences, social studies programmes also use materials from the local community, current affairs and world problems that cannot be properly classified as belonging exclusively to any particular discipline. Modern social studies programmes do not place major emphasis on the mastery of logically organised bodies of subject matter. Rather, they emphasise the functional use of

subject matter from many sources to increase social literacy and to develop socially desirable behaviours that evolve from sound attitudes and appreciation about others.

It is important to recognise the implications of the foregoing in relationship to the demands of social studies as an important academic enterprise which could be learnt and understood through its epistemology which derive from its prolific language structures. The future of social studies as a core subject in the primary and junior secondary school curricular rests on many factors including the following:

- (a) Firstly, although social studies derive its *raison d'être* largely from the social sciences, it has a different orientation. It is a broader field than that covered by the social sciences (Engle, 1977; Banks, 2005). It is an applied field which attempts to fuse scientific knowledge with ethical, philosophical, religious and social considerations which arise in the process of decision-making as practised by the citizen. Social studies is not, like the social sciences, concerned with the propagation of knowledge as such; its primary purpose is the social utilisation of knowledge. The aim is to improve the process by which citizens use knowledge from the social sciences and other areas of disciplined thought in making decisions concerning their individual behaviours and concerning questions which bear on public policy (Mezieobi, 2012; Okam, 2013).
- (b) Secondly, curriculum development in social studies involves the process of relating lessons in the subject, which are supposedly expected to cut across the social sciences (e.g. history, sociology, religion and literature) to the dilemmas of the times. The idea is to enhance the development of skills of analytical reasoning through the establishment of relationships that cut across the various disciplines; it must emphasise the processes by which the content of these disciplines are interconnected and interrelated. The enhancement of curriculum development in the social studies must involve the functional application of powerful social science concepts that establish connective tissues among different subject matters. The social studies represents an eclectic distillation of many disciplines including history, political science, geography, anthropology, psychology and economics. This distillation calls for a meaningful clarification of the interrelationships and an underscoring of the "human chemistry" that stems from the interaction of the various social disciplines including philosophy, literature, and ethics (Engle, 1977; Kazi, 2004; Tanner and Tanner, 2008; Okam, 2013).
- (c) Thirdly, social studies has to be seen as a modern attempt at an interdisciplinary study of a topic, a problem, an issue, a concern or an aspiration. In this circumstance, it is a problems-approach discipline through which man studies and learns about problems of survival in his social environment. The propagation of this problems-approach orientation, among other things, implies an involvement of the minds of learners and or students in the social problems of the day to a sufficient degree so that the *raison d'être* of the subject does not suffer. Social Studies must, therefore, be brought to focus continually on social questions, problems and issues, large or small, which youth anticipates or can be helped to anticipate. It is expected that these social and individual problems will provide the linking threads of the curriculum and language of the social studies (Okam, 2013).

- (d) Fourthly, social Studies is not only concerned with the wide dissemination of information but also the development of social and inquiry skills and the improvement of social attitudes and behaviour.
- (e) Fifthly, and very importantly, the ultimate relevance of any thought-process in the social studies is for fostering comprehension and interpretation through its extensive language structures. The functional application of this development is meant to enhance an understanding of the interrelationships of all the structures (terms, concepts, propositions, laws, theories, facts and generalisations) that make up the content of social studies texts on the one hand and the content of other relevant areas of knowledge, particularly the social sciences, on the other hand. The notion of interrelationships and inter-connections with reference to the various content used in the social studies must form the hub of any act of thought process applied in the language of classroom pedagogy of the subject area. The effort will be to relate the conceptual structures used in social studies lessons to the world of human and work affairs (Okam, 1989; Banks, 2005).

The basis of the language process in social studies education with reference to the recently introduced 9-year basic education in Nigeria.

Engle (1977) disclosed that social studies education is designed to aid a child or learner to understand man as he relates to a variety of differentiated spheres of his environment which are expressed and rooted in knowledge and curriculum-subject structures as philosophy, psychology, geography, sociology, history, political science, anthropology, economics and civics. He discloses further that, through the interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and integrative language and knowledge structures that are enshrined in the social studies curriculum, the learner is enabled to entertain a variety of understandings and perspectives which bear relationships on a variety of problems-approach subject-matter domains such as mass communication, cross-cultural studies, peace and conflict resolution, religious studies, social welfare, human resource and development studies, population studies, ethics and aesthetics, human rights and environmental studies. In the circumstance of the implications of the interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and integrative curriculum dimensions of social studies education, this subject is considered as very unique in the sense that it describes human actions in the translations of the content structures of the broad fields of human endeavours such as the arts, humanities, sciences and social sciences in a manner that is understandable to the school child and young learner (Skeel, 1971; Engle, 1977; Okam and Akinmade, 1995; Banks, 2005; Tanner and Tanner, 2008; Okam, 2012). However, unlike these broad fields, social studies education is not concerned with the propagation of knowledge as such; its primary purpose is the utilization of knowledge. The aim, as portrayed earlier, is to improve the process by which citizens use knowledge from these broad fields of human endeavour and other areas of disciplined thought in making decisions. The idea is to enhance the development of skills of analytical reasoning through the establishment of relationships that cut across the various disciplines.

Based on the advantageous assets of the curriculum paradigm structures established in social studies education as rendered above, the need is submitted for the formal integration of this subject with what is now constituted into the 9-year basic education

curriculum in Nigeria. The research ideas and insights that are being advanced in this context is that social studies education should be explored and employed as a instructional instrument for classroom pedagogy of the curricular issues at stake in Nigeria's basic education. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) introduced the 9-year basic education curriculum with a view to re-structure, review as well realign the old primary and junior secondary school curriculum contents into a continuous whole and in the process to introduce new subjects and content areas and discard those contents that do not meet the challenges of the 21st century in an information and communication technology-driven and globally-competitive world. Thus, among other aims and objectives of the 9-year basic education curriculum, the Federal Government of Nigeria advanced the need for education of this level to cope with the demands and challenges intrinsic in the promotion of skills' acquisition and a host of other value-ideals germane for effective citizenship development. It entertained the strong view that this education should be committed to a number of ideals in terms of young learners as follows: (a) ensuring the acquisition of higher morals and ethical values as well as establish fully a positive disposition towards peace, equity, justice, anti-corruption tendency and good governance; and (b) ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills.

However, in regard to exploring the language of social studies education for a rationalization of classroom instructions in basic education in Nigeria, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC)(2007) entertained the strong endorsement that one of the core compulsory subjects that could be employed in achieving the foregoing value-ideals of the 9-year basic education is social studies education. The Council expatiated that this subject could constitute a foundational curriculum instrument for establishing, strengthening and fortifying scientific and reflective thinking skills among youngsters that could equip them effectively to cope with life challenges in whatever forms. In the same vein, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC)(2008) endorsed that the social studies curriculum adequately provides for contexts and contents for buttressing human rights, scientific and technological pursuits as priority, nationality, natural law; all of which are capable of not only transforming social consciousness but also equipping learners with skills that would make them effective citizens of a new world order.

However, in spite of the pronouncements about the efficacy, usefulness and adequacy of exploring and employing the social studies as a curriculum language instrument for the classroom pedagogy of basic education, as rendered by the NERDC (2007) and UBEC (2008), these eminent and foremost national consortiums of Nigeria's educational system have not emerged with the pedagogical logistics and modalities as to how the curriculum design established in social studies education could meaningfully serve as an instructional basis for classroom work in basic education.

The research ideas and insights purveyed in this exposition holds out very fervently that one of the ways of exploring and employing the new directions and approaches in the teaching of social studies in Nigeria is the formal integration of the subject with basic education in our classroom dispensation at both the levels of primary and junior secondary

education. The merging of social studies and basic education represents an interdisciplinary approach to instruction in the two subject areas. The idea is to create learning experiences affected by experts including teachers for the purpose of meeting the need, interests aptitudes and rates of progress of individual pupils. The learning experiences which emerge from these interdisciplinary moves are designed to stimulate the emotional, social and intellectual growth of the individual pupil or student. The associated learning experiences are designed to aid each student to accept a part of the responsibility accruing for his own learning.

The advantages accruing from these new arrangements will derive from dynamic curriculum arrangements. Thus, courses in both social studies and basic education will be based both on a correlated and integrated curriculum. They will be correlated in the sense that articulation and relationships between the two subject areas will exist without any destruction of their disciplinary boundaries; they will also be correlated in that common guidelines will be established in both disciplines. Thus, units of instruction in both basic education and social studies can be held on the same topic. In social studies, students can be made to examine a lesson unit such as 'people of Nigeria'. Under this theme, students can examine various related topics including 'education', 'local customs', 'social conditions', 'traditions', etc. At the same time, these students are studying 'folklore', 'myths', and 'biographics' in the basic education. Correlated and integrated instructional experiences through an engagement of students in spelling drills, independent study projects, correlated assignments and correlated test schedules could be held in the two subject areas.

The integration of social studies and the basic education for instructional designs presupposes, among other things, an exploration of any theme, area or problem which requires the help of the two disciplines for its full understanding and the interest of more than one teacher in achieving this. Thus, integration here possesses a double concern: the co-operative endeavour between teachers to make this possible. An integral part of this correlated curriculum is the concept of 'team teaching'. This arrangement necessitates continuous interdepartmental and interdisciplinary communication in the social studies and basic education for the purpose of achieving the following: exchanging information about individual problems in classroom situations, solving common teaching problems, discussing appropriate materials, correlating test schedules and homework assignments to ease the demands on students' time, the elimination of strict departmentalisation in order to produce a significant correlation and integration between the two subject areas in question. The team teaching approach permits teachers in both subjects to know each other better and to know their students better since they continue to share information. It further allows a pooling of ideas, encourages constructive professional criticism, permits team members to specialise in tasks they do best, provides more efficient use of teacher time, and gives new teachers the opportunity to observe experienced teachers and profit from their advice (Banks, 2005).

The major aim of introducing the teaching of social studies in the 9-year basic education in this country is for the purpose of creating a solid foundation for the training and development of intelligent, responsible, self-directing and democratically minded citizens. These demands and qualities raise ethical and philosophical questions which span across many knowledge spheres including the social and natural sciences. The attainment of the

qualities demanded of the Nigerian citizens, by way of social studies, creates a problem of simultaneous acquisition of certain multiple objectives including: 'a development of desirable attitudes towards morality and obedience', 'respect for persons and those in authority;' 'development of feelings of loyalty and patriotism;' 'the acquisition of desirable skills and healthy values;' 'An understanding of a working knowledge of these objectives raises the issue of grasping the interconnections and interrelationships between them through an application of the requisite language structures in the basic education of social studies.

That the social studies is expected to have an assured but a bright future demands that schools will be made to exemplify in every respect, including their governance, a society of intelligent and responsible citizens working towards improving the life which they are living (Engle, 1977; Kazi, 2004; Mezieobi, 2012; Okam, 2013). The schools will be used as laboratories where students can openly investigate the working of a human community. This approach calls for the need for instituting collaborative learning in social studies. In this process, teachers are expected to be much more than managers of learning resources; they must be active collaborators in meaningful learning. The employment of collaborative efforts might involve making an application of team teaching procedures in social studies absolute. This new and bold venture is bound to require additional time for team members to work with individual students or small groups; it will provide opportunities for students or teachers to be involved together in independent study projects through the effective utilisation of teacher's talents in various types of instructional approaches; it will expose students to a variety of instructional techniques and teacher's abilities. The team approach may be used in achieving the need for meaningful evaluation of students for the purpose of monitoring their continued progress (National Policy on Education, 2008). The interdisciplinary nature of social studies makes it obvious that collaborative evaluation is necessary in order to arrive at a 'total' and individualised evaluation of each pupil. Thus, team members observing students under varied circumstances are in a better position than one single teacher to make judgement about a particular pupil (Banks, 2005; Tanner and Tanner, 2008).

Thus, it is endorsed that the ultimate relevance of any act of language thought in social studies is for fostering comprehension and interpretation. The functional application of language is meant to enhance an understanding of the interrelationships of all the structures (terms, concepts, propositions, laws, theories, facts, and generalisations) that make up the content of social studies texts on the one hand and the content of other relevant areas of knowledge particularly the social sciences. The notion of interrelationships and interconnections with reference to the various content used in the social studies must form the hub of any act of language thought applied in the pedagogy of the subject area. The effort will be to relate language structures used in social studies lessons to the world of human and work affairs. If one of the aims of social studies impinges on the utilisation of knowledge, then, its basic education should assist the individual improve the processes by which he uses knowledge from many spheres of disciplined thought in making decisions concerning his behaviour and issues which bear relevance on the larger society.

Exploring the language and curriculum structures in social studies in promoting skills' acquisition and development among young learners in the 9-year basic education framework.

Okam (2011) reflects that the language perspective in social studies education is primarily engaged in describing and explaining human skills and activities (whether social, cultural, political and economic) as they occur in society. In this development, social studies is considered as an interdisciplinary study through which the citizen learns about skills for survival in his environment. This orientation stipulates that the subject should assist the citizen acquire the analytical skills and ideas including the problem-solving tools that are developed by scholars in the various fields, particularly the social science, for the purpose of examining and solving societal problems, especially in the context of the current challenges deriving from the demands of knowledge-based economy.

Thus Boateng (1997) endorses that the essence of language development in social studies education examined in the context of the demands of knowledge-based economy in Nigeria is premised on a number of skills and value-dimensions of citizenship thus: (a) creating an awareness about the need for instituting democracy and democratic norms and values in the country; (b) creating the awareness amongst individuals about the provisions of the Nigerian constitutions; (c) acquisition of the knowledge about the issue of creating adequate and functional political literacy amongst individuals generally; (d) recognition of the vitality of sensitizing to individuals the functions and obligations of governments in a democracy; (e) a commitment of individual to the knowledge of awareness of their rights and duties and to respect the rights of others; (f) a recognition of the need for the endorsement of the production of responsible, well informed and self-reliant citizens; and (g) a recognition of the vitality for the inculcation of right skills, values and attitudes for the development of individuals and the Nigerian society.

Kazi (2004) recounts that it is the commitment to individuals and citizens to such human skills and values-dimensions intrinsic in the language structures of social studies education as "power of love", "cooperation", "confidence", "trustworthiness", "integrity", "consideration", "hard work", "interdependence", and "loyalty", that have contributed in the building and establishment of the great nations and democracies of the world. Kazi (2004) reminds us that these skills and values are essentially constituted into the ideals that have been embedded within the socio-political and socioeconomic frameworks of the thriving and great democracies of the world such as England, France, the United States of America, Canada, Germany and Japan. He expatiates further that these great nations were built by individuals and citizens who are positively committed at exploring and employing human skills and values dimensions of social studies education in bringing about a development and enhancement of the social, economic, cultural, political and religious out-reaches of their societies to enviable heights. Kazi (2004) endorses that the foregoing values, skills and ideals of social studies education constitute pillars of strength of any democratic society.

Banks (2005) advances that the ideals rooted in the curriculum structures established in social studies education are designed to arm the citizens with the necessary skills required to make them highly relevant in meeting the demands intrinsic in the present crave for the assets ensconced in the quest for knowledge based economy, a transformational and

educational design which is tailored at societal advancement at large. Banks (2005) discloses that one the human “skills” intrinsic in these ideals is meant to enable the citizen recognize his potentialities to make concessions and compromises in the light of attempting to solve and resolve problems and or issues which confront him on the one hand and the large society on the other hand. The fundamental characteristic of the citizen, according to Banks (2005), is that he possesses the “skill” to cooperate. He discloses that it is on this very characteristic of the citizen that his creative abilities for addressing and solving societal problems are rooted. Banks (2005) endorses that an important “skill” that can be used for designating effective citizens is their outstanding performance in situations which require them to exhibit skills, potentialities and abilities in the art of cooperating and conforming to a variety of societal needs and demands. He advances that it is largely this “skill” to conform and cooperate that contributes to the superiority of good citizens when compared to the ordinary members of their groups in such respects as : (a) dependability in accepting responsibilities (b) activity and social participation; and (c) in the sphere of socioeconomic status. This frame of thought is given credence by such social studies scholars as Fleckmore, 2002; Newton, 2002; Osier and Starkey, 2003; and Lambert, 2003 who endorse that good citizens exceed the ordinary members of their group in such creative skills, qualities and characteristics that are germane for effective leadership as: (a) sociability; (b) initiative; (c) persistence; (d) knowing how to get things done; (e) perseverance; (f) self-confidence; (g) alertness to and insight into situations; (h) cooperativeness; (i) popularity; (j) adaptability; and (k) verbal fecundity.

Thus Banks (2005) reminds us that the curriculum and language structures enshrined in social studies education have been capitalized upon by a number of world democracies including the United States of America, Canada, Germany and Japan for the advancement of their citizens’ skills and potentialities in the task of nation-building and national development. He endorses that it has become a norm for institutions of learning to capitalize on the curriculum and language structures in the subject in the task of advancing and propagating a variety of skills amongst learners, individuals and citizens, which are tailored at enabling them acquire knowledge spheres necessary for coping with the challenges created by global levels of relevance and competitiveness necessitated and stimulated by the current crave for educational transformation. Through meaningful exposures to curriculum structures in social studies, according to Banks (2005:220), the individual including the citizen is challenged to cultivate an appreciable level of mastery in the acquisition of variegated socioeconomic and multidimensional skills which are considered highly indispensable for nation-building and national development in the life of a given democracy thus:

An appreciation of the nature and laws of social life; a display of intelligent and genuine loyalty to high national ideals; a possession of a sense of responsibility as a member of social groups; a display of sense of loyalty and a sense of obligation to his city, state and nation and to the human race, and a possession of the intelligence and the will to participate effectively in the promotion of social well-being.

Thus Banks (2005) submits that it has become a norm to visualize the good citizen, who has benefited from relevant curriculum and language programmes in social studies education, as possessing certain desirable skills and attributes including the following:

Looking at things with a democratic slant; a belief in decency and fair play, forbearance and respect for others; a commitment to an acquisition of the customs, traditions and nationalistic ideals of his country; a belief in the idea of progressive improvement of society; a desire to promote the general welfare and be pledge to raise and safeguard living standards for all; and a belief in universal education.

Challenges in exploring the human skills' development assets intrinsic in language and curriculum structures in social studies examined in the context of quality perspectives of pedagogical issues in 9-year basic education.

The 9-year basic education represents a baseline that is tailored to satisfy, at least, the minimum learning needs of people. It provides reading, writing, communication and numeracy skills. It comprises a wide variety of formal and non-formal educational activities and programmes designed to enable learners acquire functional skills. Programmes in basic education, according to Adirika and Oluwatayo (2013), are usually tailored at achieving, among others, the purpose of promoting social effectiveness in people by raising their level of consciousness in such a way as to enable them align themselves with the dictates of the reality of their lives and be able to meet the demands and challenges of their environment. The Federal Government's "Master Plan on Implementation Guidelines" (2004) expatiates further that basic education is aimed at equipping individuals with such human skills that will enable them achieve the following designs: (a) live meaningful and fulfilling lives; (b) contribute to the development of society; (c) derive maximum social, economic and cultural habits from society; and (e) discharge their civic obligations completely.

The curricular imperatives of basic education, according to Tanner and Tanner (2008), emanated from a variety of factors intrinsically embedded into it. These factors presuppose that curriculum development must, of necessity, derive from them, including the following: (a) a consideration of the nature and interests of learners; (b) a concern for the problems of society; (c) an awareness regarding a notion of the intendance of knowledge; (d) the need for a recognition of the continuity between theoretical and applied knowledge; (e) a recognition of the authentic function as distinct and different from the function of specialized knowledge; and (f) a recognition of the need for the involvement of the whole school community, and not merely the scholar-specialist when dealing with curricular issues which impinge on basic education.

Curriculum programmes involving and embracing the foregoing perspectives must, of necessity require interdisciplinary and problem-solving approaches in their content and subject matter organization. Banks (2005) was prompted to advance that the effective implementation of the curricular underpinnings and imperatives involved in the foregoing perspectives in teaching-learning situations must depend on professional teachers whose expertise does not only depend on their subject-matter knowledge or background but rather on their rational application of methodologies and styles of teaching which can contribute

significantly in bringing about innovations and developments rooted in curriculum integration.

Tanner and Tanner (2008) endorsed further that the curricular underpinnings of basic education are geared at creating avenues not only for self-direction and for the liberation of individual capacities but also for opening a world of changes and opportunities that may be available to an individual in life for the acquisition of variegated skills that are rooted in self-fulfilment and self-actualization. They reflected further that the tenets of basic education essentially derive sustenance from a progressivists curriculum legacy which endorses that in the education process, there is always the persistent force towards equilibrium in considering the learner, society and the world of organized knowledge as vital interactive sources and influence for skills acquisition through curriculum development. These sources and influence, according to Tanner and Tanner (2008) emerged in the last three or four decades as a curriculum paradigm intrinsic in basic education. In this circumstance, basic education demands that the learner, the society and the world of knowledge must be treated in their complementarity rather than antagonistically if educational progress is to be registered. Thus, a commitment to the tenets of basic education is expected to provide a kind of general education which would help create unity out of diversity. The tenets are in consonance with Dewey's (1952:85-86) progressivist views about the curriculum which subscribes that:

The body of knowledge is indeed one; it is a spiritual organism. To attempt to chop off a member here and amputate an organ there is the variest impossibility. The problem is not one of elimination, but of organization; of simplification not through denial and rejection but through harmony.

Thus Tanner and Tanner (2008:435) advanced that the curriculum underpinnings of basic education must, of necessity, be channelled at addressing and bringing about possible solutions to issues and problems which have bearing on the life of the young learner with reference to his community in terms of enabling him acquire the variegated skills which are intrinsic in the following value-structures: (a) the question of how best to relate the curriculum to community; (b) a provision of the necessary where-with-all for an endorsement of a proposal for the curriculum to be re-synthesized and re-humanized including an endorsement of a search for new structures with respect to the needs, interests and aspirations of the community; (c) a commitment to a variety of attempts to develop interdisciplinary courses such as "ethnic studies", "population and family life studies", "urban studies", "social studies" "ecology and social planning", "environmental studies", and "sex education"; (d) a commitment to personal-community problems-approach to curriculum planning and development; (e) a commitment to an identification with inquiry and knowledge production, including a concern for social problem-solving; (f) a concern for a commitment to reflective thinking for the purpose of effectively channelling it to social problems of the day to a sufficient degree; (g) a concern for an exhibition of intellectual productivity rather than the projection of a counter-productive enterprise through the process itself; (h) a commitment to the liberation of the capacities of every individual for the purpose of embracing individual autonomy within the framework of the community; (i) a commitment to a provision of education tailored in the service of the community ideals; and (j) a concern for a commitment at relating learning to real-life situations and problems and

thereby possibly bringing about a closure of the gap between curriculum development and community needs.

The foregoing skills and value-structures which are rooted in basic education curriculum were largely instrumental for prompting Banks' (2005) endorsement that the curriculum design structures established in social studies education possess almost a similar foundational basis for pedagogical operations, if the two programmes (basic education and social studies education) are comparatively examined. A number of academics and scholars (Banks, 2005; Tanner and Tanner, 2008; Lambert, 2003; Onuoha, 2009; Mezieobi, 2012; Okam, 2012) strongly entertain the view that the curriculum design established in social studies education could be explored and employed effectively as a pedagogical instrument for classroom dispensation of the skills and values dimensions of basic education.

In his curricular elucidations on the virtues of the language structures in social studies education, Engle (1977) reminds us that the foregoing skills, attributes and characteristic qualities clearly raise ethical, moral and philosophical questions which fall well outside the scope of any strict single subject discipline. Thus, Banks (2005) endorses that the functional inadequacies of education as mediated through the curricular underpinnings of the arts and the social science disciplines for the purpose of inculcating the subject-matter designs of basic education in the young has become very obvious to be left too long unrecognized, unidentified and unattended to with all required immediacy.

The foregoing reflections were responsible for the shifting of classroom dispensation of the issues at stake in basic education from the individual curricular offerings of the arts subjects and the social sciences to broad but integrated groups of knowledge spheres as represented in interdisciplinary and integrated content areas for a better handling and for effectively coping with the challenges and opportunities intrinsic in the new programme (Engle, 1977; Tanner and Tanner, 2008; Banks, 2005; Mezieobi, 2012; and Okam, 2012). These academics and teachers endorse that the curricular packages enshrined in social studies are designed to bring about some kind of general education programmes in which the language of instructions are geared towards cutting across the disciplines, while special efforts are made to show the intimate relationships between these fields as concepts from them are brought to bear on issues raised in basic education with reference to the young learner, as he grapples with circumstances that impinge on nation-building within the framework of a given community, state or country.

Structural linkages between the curriculum imperatives of basic education and curricular underpinnings intrinsic in language structures in social studies education examined in the context of human skills' acquisition and development in schools.

The curricular paradigm structures established in social studies education may not so much be concerned with the production and propagation of knowledge for its own sake as with a utilization of content structures derived from a variety of disciplines including the arts, humanities, languages, natural and social sciences, mathematics, mass communication, cross-cultural studies, peace and conflict resolution, religious studies, social welfare, human resources and development studies, population studies, ethics and aesthetics, human rights

and environmental studies for the purpose of addressing and solving problems through the various thought processes enshrined in “curriculum synthesis” and or “curriculum integration”. Consequently the divisions of subject-matter that are characteristic of the subject approach curriculum are dissolved since these problems are not confined to singular disciplines or subject fields that constitute the separate bodies of organized knowledge (Tanner and Tanner, 2008; Banks, 2005; Mezieobi, 2012; and Okam, 2012). Thus, the curricular underpinnings reflected in both social studies education and basic education advocate the need to capitalize and utilize the “wholistic approach” to teaching and learning. Their respective curricular paradigm structures are, therefore, conceptualized on the theory of integrating related subject-matter areas. These curriculum structures are also inline and in consonance with the Gestalt Theory whose slogan stipulates that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”. The implication of this perspective is that an issue, a skill a topic, an aspiration or a problem is best tackled by making use of appropriate knowledge spheres from different subject disciplines.

In effect, the ideas generated and exhibited in the two curricular paradigm structures (basic education and social studies education) underscore the need to make connections between a variety of subject disciplines towards an understanding of man and his interaction with his total environment. Lambert (2003) reflects that as a global society, we simply cannot afford a generation that fails to see or care about connection. He maintains that since broadly-based social issues cross the boundaries of academic disciplines, the notion that the separate disciplines must always be studied in their pure forms is insufficient for a curriculum intended to demonstrate the relationship between knowledge and rationally-based social participation. In almost the same vein, Tanner and Tanner (2008) posited that one of the curricular and language assets enshrined in social studies education and basic education is that they do not only provide opportunities in developing the interrelationships of subject-matters that otherwise would be fragmented but also avoid the unmanageable multiplicity of disjointed courses and programmes that congest the school curriculum, particularly at the lower levels of education. McCowan (2009) further argues that the strengths of integrated curriculum that is intrinsically enshrined in both social studies education and basic education is designed “to provide in a wholistic sense a consideration of man’s aspirations, hopes, dreams, hurts, achievements and frustrations in order to understand and interpret his behaviours with a view to improving his status and also solving his problems through the use of knowledge from a variety of subject disciplines”.

The association of curricular programmes ensconced in both social studies education and basic education with modern trends in primary education is essentially designed to solve problems created by the traditional separate subject approach to the curriculum. The curricular paradigm structures enshrined in both programmes of studies, according to McCowan (2009), possess a universal quality and include many different areas of knowledge and activities and all these have common elements and qualities of being selected rationally on the basis of pragmatic considerations of the ability, aptitudes, interests and curricular needs of specific groups of young pupils; their strengths derive from their orientations outside the structures of individual subject disciplines. Also, the two curricular patterns are essentially concerned with studying the real world of a learner’s environment as a starting point for further leaning.

Exploring the language skills' development assets in social studies for quality implementation of curricular imperatives in 9-year basic education: Tasks of the professionally competent teacher.

It is upheld very fervently that if the language of social studies education, as a curriculum design, is to be explored effectively in generating among young learners a cultivation and enhancement of human and socio-economic development skills in the context of quality 9-year basic education programme, we need to capitalize on the assets of the competent professional teachers of the subject in bringing about the implementation of the designs envisaged. It is deemed that this teacher could constitute a primary determiner of what pupils learn in the basic education scheme. This frame of thought possesses lots of implications in terms of the responsibilities and tasks that this teacher has to execute purposefully and meaningfully in fostering human skills' acquisition and development among young learners in the Nigerian educational system.

Thus, a major aspect of the function of the competent professional social studies teacher of basic education demands that he needs to recognize that the totality of the instructional design rooted in the "new" programme may not be characterized in the mastery of classroom pedagogy in the separate or traditional subject disciplines whether arts, humanities and social sciences (Okam, 2002). This teachers' knowledge has to derive essentially from a curriculum content which is aimed at incorporating integratively knowledge structures and inspirations from many realms of learning. The curriculum enshrined in this development needs to be oriented, amongst others, at creating a universe of inquiry, discourse and understanding through language among young learners of different backgrounds and aspirations who, as prospective citizens of a free society, are obliged to share certain responsibilities which are rooted in a number of human skills' acquisition and development. Tanner and Tanner (2008) endorsed that these skills bear relevance on the development of the following virtues: "self-confidence and initiative", "power of imagination and resourcefulness" "desire for knowledge and continued learning", "appreciation of the dignity of man and liberty", "a sense of compassion for the less fortunate", "a sense of respect and tolerance for the opinions of others"; a cultivation and display of social skills, attitudes and values such as "cooperation", "participation", "interdependence", "open-mindedness", "honesty", "trustworthiness", "integrity", "diligence", "obedience", including a cultivation of "a spirit of national consciousness and patriotism". The professional competent teacher has to recognize that the curriculum content envisaged in these skills may not necessarily be concerned with the production and propagation of knowledge for its own sake as with a utilization of highly differentiated subject-matter structures derived from a variety of disciplines for the purpose of addressing and solving personal and social problems.

The professional social studies teachers' competence is rooted, among others, in his preparedness to visualize that curriculum programmes in basic education, as an instructional design are meant to establish a strong bases and foundation for a life-long learning. In other words, the curriculum established in basic education programmes has to be functional. This "functionality principles" presupposes that the envisaged curriculum packages have to be problem-solving in their orientations; they must possess retentive and transfer values and

must also display a purpose that relates to life-situations (Joof and Okam, 1992). These instructional criteria, according to Okam (2002), must be made operational in a classroom setting within a framework of an understanding that basic education represents a relevant curriculum package which aims at integrating many related subject areas and disciplines so long as they offer to the learner a wholistic portrait of man and his knowledge of society.

The professional teacher has to develop an awareness that curriculum development in basic education largely involves the process of relating lessons in its programmes which are supposedly expected to cut across the arts, humanities, sciences and the social sciences to the dilemmas of the times. In other words, this teacher must not only be preoccupied with a purveyance of the subject-matter of these disciplines by way of the envisaged basic education curriculum; he must emphasize and display a knowledge of the language process by which the content of these disciplines are interconnected and interrelated. He is bound to advance the view that an enhancement of curriculum development in basic education programmes largely involves a functional application of large varieties of “social concepts” and skills that establish connective tissues among different subject-matters. He has to project the perspective that programmes in basic education must be designed to display an eclectic distillation of a variety of subject disciplines including the social sciences, arts, humanities and the sciences; and that this distillation calls for a meaningful clarification of the interrelationships and an understanding of the human and social chemistry that emerge from the interaction of these differentiated subject-matter areas (Okam, 2002). He has to portray basic education as an instructional design which endorses the interdisciplinary study of a topic, a problem, a skill, an issue, a concern or an aspiration. In this orientation, the professional teacher has to display basic education as a problem-approach curriculum instrument through which an individual learns about problems of survival in his environment. Thus, in his classroom display, this teacher must necessarily involve the minds of learners in the problems of the day so that the *raison d’être* of basic education itself does not suffer. He is also expected to propagate the “cognitive perspective” that personal and societal problems are meant to provide the linking threads of curriculum programmes in basic education.

The professional basic education teacher has to be oriented to the perspectives that the subject-matter in its curriculum framework has been developed to solve the problem created by the traditional subject approach to instructions in education. This approach tends to create a compartmentalized and abstract view of knowledge in the minds of young learners in primary schools; it also demonstrates a negation of the significance of child-centeredness in education. The professional teacher has to recognize that the current and approved pedagogical practices which should be featured in basic education programmes are aimed at incorporating and integrating knowledge and inspirations from many realms of thought and subject-matter. He must necessarily cultivate an awareness that the instructional implications of “curriculum integration” regarding the content areas of basic education programmes derives from an understanding that a single subject is not enough to explain the issues and problems involved in the study of man and his environment. The professional teacher has to entertain a high level of awareness regarding the view that the effective implementation of the curricular goals and programmes which are intrinsic in basic education largely depends on expert teachers whose adroitness and expertise do not only

spring from their subject-matter knowledge or background in the arts, humanities or the social sciences but rather emanates from their rational application of methodologies and styles of teaching which can contribute significantly in bringing about innovations and developments that are constituted into curriculum integration and or curriculum synthesis. Thus, the teacher's expertise is largely conceptualized on the "theory of integration" of a variety of subjects and disciplines which stress, in effect, the need to make connections between them towards enabling learners acquire appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills needed for laying the foundations for life-long learning. The teacher, therefore, has to embrace a good deal of the "new" methodologies, with the effort to move learners away from rote-learning and teacher-centred procedures. Some examples of these techniques include: 'inquiry methods', 'role playing', 'problem-solving', 'small group discussion', 'project and dramatization methods', 'simulation' and 'questioning methods'. Thus, the mark of a good teacher, according to Rice and Rice (1977), is not that he uses all these techniques but that he employs the right method to get at the right job. In all these methods, the professional teacher's major function is to motivate, plan, manage and control teaching-learning situations to the end of achieving learning objectives which are rooted in human skills' acquisition and development.

If the professional teacher is to participate in the effective teaching of curriculum programmes established in basic education, he must be involved in a better use of pedagogical instruments including ICT assets and techniques for the achievement of better results classroom-wise. There is a host of instructional materials which could be placed at his disposal for the general purpose of achieving effectiveness in teaching and learning. The teacher who is committed to an achievement of the goals of basic education through language structures in social studies education needs to see these instructional materials as "teaching assistants" which can be used in enabling the learner acquire more "cognitive perspectives" and skills including finding answers to problems, building of new insights and appreciations and making rational choices amongst alternative courses of action. The teacher has to use these instructional materials for communicating ideas to the learner and the principal task of the learner is to grasp them (Okam, 2002). Also, the professional teacher has to accommodate the view that the present day evaluation of the objectives of teaching-learning programmes must, of necessity, become far more all-embracing in the sense that everything which goes into any teaching-learning situation or exercise is evaluated. This modern approach may last for much longer periods than the employment of traditional methods because it is designed to determine a learner's progress not only cognitively and affectively but also his attainment in the area of skills' acquisition and development has to be ascertained. In this respect, evaluation may include, among others, a determination of the details about how learners have acquired knowledge and skills and what they can do with these; an assessment of teachers including their use of resources for effective teaching; an evaluation of a particular method in terms of how much learners have been able to acquire requisite skills and how they react to the programme or courses enshrined in the "new" basic education scheme.

It is entertained that if curriculum improvement is to be constituted into a vital feature of basic education, the professional social studies teacher has to visualize the curriculum design established in it as a vital instrument for propagating the ideals of

democratic citizenship. In this perspective, according to Tanner and Tanner (2008:557-558), this teacher needs to be committed to enabling young learners gain and develop awareness in terms of the following skills: a) constitutional rights and liberties, the environment, ethical values, interdependence of people, human rights and responsibilities; b) a development of skills of participation in civil life and a commitment of values compatible with democratic principles; c) the need for heterogeneous groupings of learners in all school-work related to civil competence; d) the virtues associated with a democratic school environment; and e) an involvement of the entire school faculty in teaching citizenship education.

Since basic education capitalizes on the entrenchment of the tenets of democratic citizenship within the framework of school. (Banks, 2005), the professional social studies teacher is called upon to develop a capacity and commitment, amongst learners, to think and act reflectively on problems and controversial issues. Tanner and Tanner (2008) advanced that an avoidance of reflective consideration of such problems and issues is to avoid the function of democratic citizenship.

The professional teacher has to entertain a possession of a sound knowledge of the philosophy behind basic education considered within the framework of teacher education. He must necessarily portray the philosophy of teacher education in the context of basic education programmes, as one of the curricular avenues of establishing a strong language basis for grooming and producing prospective citizens and of forging a cohesive society that will support a notion of nation-building in Nigeria (Onuoha, 2009; Mezieobi, 2012; Okam, 2012). He has to propagate the idea that this philosophy presupposes that the curriculum package envisaged in this development has to be functional. This “functionality principle” must be made operational in the classroom within the framework of an understanding that basic education represents a relevant curriculum instrument which aims at integrating a variety of subject-matter areas and disciplines, that are tailored at enabling young learners become committed to the acquisition and development of numerous human skills’ structures which bear relevance to human survival in a given environment, apart from offering to the young learner a wholistic portrait of man and society (Okam, 2013).

Conclusion

In order to ensure effective implementation of basic education, as an instructional instrument in the Nigerian schools’ system, we need professionally competent social studies teachers who must necessarily endorse and display, in practical terms, the quality imperatives and perspectives established in effective teacher production and teacher productivity in the context of the new scheme through the use of relevant language structures. It is entertained that these quality assurance imperatives and perspectives of basic education possess positive curricular linkages with a variety of the skills’ development assets which are enshrined in the instructional design structures established in social studies education through its powerful language connectivity. The plausibility of the professionally competent social studies teacher in coping with the quality pedagogical demands of basic education may not be contested. It is entertained that if this caliber of teachers are necessarily armed with the vital curricular requisites needed for the execution of the tasks in the basic education scheme, they could achieve these objectives with reference to young

learners as follows: (a) identifying, recognizing and promoting individual differences amongst them; (b) varying learning experiences to take care of individual differences amongst them; (c) commitment to learners' participation and involvement in teaching-learning situations classroom-wise; (d) employment of questioning techniques as pedagogical instruments to challenge learners' intelligence and ability; (e) displaying respect for learners' interests, choices and individual decisions; (f) exploring and employing guidance and counselling techniques for treating and effecting management of individuals and group development; (g) provision of stimulating and conducive environments with learning opportunities through the employment of varied instructional materials and resources; (h) execution of supervisory services so as to ascertain the adequacy of teaching-learning situations and the suitability of instructional devices and techniques; and (i) commitment to engagements in critical observations and study of the pupils on individual basis.

In the bid to subject themselves to the rigours of quality assurance imperatives of the 9-year basic education programme in Nigeria, professional competent social studies teachers operating in it need to be committed to the quest for improvement and development in the context of the following suggestions and recommendations: (a) exposure to training and re-training designs, devices and techniques so as to meet changing scientific and technological challenges; (b) identification and maximization of abilities in the interest of learners; (c) encouraging and endorsing the relevance of integrative and wholistic education, through language structures in order to promote all-round skills' acquisition and development of learners; and (d) a commitment to consistent and continuous curriculum development to cater for different learning experiences that will appeal to the different nature and abilities of individual learners; (f) endorsement of teachers' attainment of mastery and competence in the use of illustrations including the employment of varied instructional materials, resources, communication and human relations skills and devices to enable them relate and communicate with different children in the class and the school; (g) endorsement of the need for these teachers to obtain formal training in educational technology; and (h) a recognition of the need for children to be exposed to varying learning experiences so as to develop inherent abilities hidden in them.

References

- Adirika, B. N. and Oluwatayo, G.K. (2013).** The Nigeria Universal Basic Education Programme: The statusquo and the way forward, *Research Journal in Organizational Psychology and Educational Studies*, 2 (6) 325 – 332.
- Banks, J. A. (2005).** Citizenship education for a pluralistic society, *the Social studies* 881 (5) 210-215.
- Bellack, A.A. (1965).** What knowledge is of most worth? In Alexander, W.M. (ed.) *The Changing Secondary School Curriculum*. Allen and york: Holt, Rinehart and Winaton.
- Boateng S. K. (1997).** Citizenship education in Nigeria schools: Its history and present status. A commissioned paper for principals of schools and colleges in Lagos State, organized by Nigerian Conservation Foundation, March 19th, 1997.

- Dewey, J.** (1952). *How we think*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd.
- Du Bey, D.L. and Barth, J.L.** (1980). *Social Studies: The inquiry method approach*. Lagos: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.
- Engle, S. H.** (1977). Exploring the meaning of the social studies. In L. Rubin (Ed.) *Curriculum handbook*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Federal Ministry of Education (2008). *Teachers' handbook for the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum in Nigeria*. Abuja: NERDC Press.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *Master Plan on Implementation Guidelines on Basic Education*. Abuja: NERDC Press.
- Fleckmore, M.** (2002). Democracy, citizenship and school improvement: What can one school tell us? *School Leadership and Management*, 22(4), 421-437.
- Joof, G.W and Okam, C.C.** (1992). The place of social studies curriculum in the context of teachers as managers: Implication for the 6-3-3-4 System in Mezieobi, K.A (ed.) *Understanding Social Studies Education in Nigeria*. Warri: Genteel Publishing Company.
- Kazi, P. N.** (2004). The impact of social studies education on student teachers' value dispositions for effective citizenship in the colleges of education in the North Central Zone of Nigeria. An Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Jos.
- Lambert, D.** (2003). Citizenship education through the humanities. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 21 (3), 19-22.
- Mc Cowan, T.** (2009). *Rethinking citizenship education: A curriculum for participatory democracy*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Mezieobi, K. A.** (2012). *New frontier areas in social studies in Nigeria*. Owerri: Acadapeak Publishers.
- Nigerian Education Research Development Council (NERDC) (2007). *The 9-year Basic education curriculum at a glance*. Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Okam, C. C.** (1989). Exploring the language of the social studies: A case for a rationalization of classroom instructions on the Nigerian educational scene, *Nigerian Journal of Social Studies*, vol.1, No.1 and 2.
- Okam, C. C.** (2002). *Readings in new developments in Nigerian education: Issues and insights*. (A collection of curriculum papers). Jos: DEKA publications.
- Okam, C. C.** (2011). Exploring civic education for effective citizenship in the task of nation-building in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Social Studies (NJSS)* Vol. XIV (1) 1 – 20.
- Okam, C.C.** (2012). Assets intrinsic in curriculum paradigm structures for promoting social studies education as an innovation for meeting human resources development challenges in 21st century Nigeria, in E. Kpangban, et al. (eds.) *Reforms and innovation in Nigerian education*, pp. 1 – 53. Onitsha: West and Solomon Publishing Coy. Ltd.
- Okam, C. C.** (2013). Needed paradigm shift for re-positioning social studies education to meet vision 20-20-20 challenges. *Nigerian Journal of Social studies and Civic Education (NJSSCE)* Vol. 2 (1) 39-52.

- Okam, C. C. and Akinmade, C.T.** (1995). Integrated science education for responsible citizenship in a rapidly changing Nigerian society, *Proceedings Of The 8th International Organization Of Science And Technology Education (IOSTE) Symposium on Science Technology Education for Responsible Citizenship and Economic Development*. Edmonton: University of Alberta.
- Okobiah, O. S.** (1985). The new National Policy on Education and the development of the Social studies curriculum for the Nigerian secondary schools, *Nigerian Journal of Curriculum studies*, 2 (2) 66 - 72
- Onuoha, J. C.** (2009). Relevance of Nigerian philosophy of education and national value re-orientation: Issues and challenges for social studies education. *Journal of educational Research and Development*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 156-161.
- Osier, A. and Starkey, H.** (2003). Learning for cosmopolitan citizenship: Theoretical debates and young people's experiences, *Educational Review*, 55 (3) 243-254.
- Rice J.C and Rice C.H.** (1977). General methods in callaghan, J.F. and Clark, L.M (ed). *Teaching in the elementary schools: planning for competence*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc.
- Taba, H.** (1962). *Teachers' handbook for elementary social studies*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Tanner, D. and Tanner, L. M.** (2008). Curriculum development: Theory into practice. 5th Edition. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc.
- Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) (2008). Training manual on the 9-year basic education curriculum. Abuja: UBEC.