

# **NEW CHALLENGES FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM CONTENT IN A GLOBALISED SOCIAL SYSTEM**

*BY*

**ENU, DONALD BETTE  
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR  
CALABAR**

## **ABSTRACT**

Within the framework of globalised social system, the Nigeria education system has been exposed to a lot of challenges, which have rendered the system vulnerable to certain deficiencies thereby posing new challenges to it. This is based on the fact that the system has not kept pace with the on-going changes in the society which are characterized by rapid changes in educational ideas and system, in political order and economic system and in values system. This paper throws a deeper challenge to social studies curriculum content as a value oriented discipline to overhaul, remake and accommodate current proliferation of education with specific human oriented knowledge considered indispensable in the contemporary World order. It is hoped that when these new issues are fully integrated into the social studies curriculum content and made functional, the products of the school system (students) would be able to internalize the values of interpersonal relationships and cooperation to ensure peaceful co-existence of people, groups and Nations of the world grappling with the forces of globalization.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Caught in the web of globalization, the Nigeria education system is facing difficulties which translate to a decline in public support and erosion of public confidence. This is attributed to the inability of our education system to keep pace with the on-going changes in the society (Oloyade, 1999). Corroborating the above, Enu (1999) noted that the world today is characterized by rapid changes, essentially in educational ideas and system, in economic system, in values and political order.

The above changes are indirect response to the forces of globalization which affect educational planning today in terms of rising emphasis on technology and information in the classroom (Mundy), 1998). Adding to this is the growing demands for higher education and aggressive popular discourse in preparing children and nations for a competitive international information economy and democratization with its emphasis on promoting human rights. The implication here according to Enu (1999), Oloyade, (1999) is that our new generation will face complex problems of survival which have never been before. It therefore becomes imperative that the entire education system and the curriculum content in particular would be such that provide the recipients with the tools for survival in a rapidly changing world experiencing global interdependence.

In the light of the above, Nigeria cannot afford to stand by and watch the current trend of globalization which aims at making the world a global village. It is therefore clear that no country can stay on her own as no individual person can live without interacting with others. Thus the need for promoting cross-cultural relationship among nations cannot be over emphasized, considering the quest for world peace and the current trend to evolve a "one-world culture". This indeed is the culture that is supposed to bring the whole world together as a community in which mutual understanding is assumed to be prevalent.

In line with the above view, a new vision of the world is emerging which according to Greig, Pike & Selby (1991) is:

*A world in which the whole is more than the sum of the parts, a world in which things exist in relationship with other things, a world in which values differences as well as sameness... this is a new world view or paradigm resonates within our inner selves and awakens new possibilities (p. 20).*

Given this complex and dynamic world, the question is what realistic instrument can be used to address the obvious short comings in the society which are products of global forces? The answer to this is within the framework of social studies curriculum which is value oriented in content. As an integrated discipline, it teaches the skills of effective living in the society. It teaches how people can co-exist in the society or any social group we found ourselves, in our physical environment and in our modern world of science and technology.

In the light of these global forces emerging from issues of human rights violation, the quest for global peace and stability, eco-crises, repressive regimes, child education, the need for development education, minority education, Gender studies and democracy education, values educations all put together constitute new and stronger challenges for social studies education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER**

Political scientists and diplomatic historians have long been interested in the question of world order with European nation-states and their governments sought ways to establish international order in Europe following the destructive wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They sought to establish guidelines, practices and international institutions that ensure peace and order in Europe and in the rest of the world, much of which was under European colonial rule (Social science Research Council, 2004).

Attempts to maintain world order failed with the outbreak of the World War I (1914-1918). At the end of the war, the then president of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson led international effort to establish a "new world order that would guarantee world peace and stability. This began with the creation of the League of Nations, an intergovernmental organization whose primary function was to keep peace in the world through ordered relationships among member nations.

However, the league could not forge peace with the outbreak of the World War II which ravaged many parts of Europe and East Asia until 1945. The widespread destruction experienced by so many countries during the war contributed to far-reaching support for new efforts to establish the United Nations, which succeeded the League of Nations. The United Nations Charter Institutionalized the key principles upon which the world order would be built which are essentially national sovereignty, non-intervention and international cooperation.

The mandate of the united nations in search of the new world order and international cooperation is of particular interest to this power. By its nature, social studies is the study that emphasizes the importance of man who is in the central position and his activities are studies in relation to his various environments (physical, social, economic, cultural and political etc.). it's most important characteristic is that it is a corrective discipline that examines the present education system with a view to correcting the ills of the colonial heritage that sought to prevent national unity, cooperation among people and development (Eboh & Ukong, 1993).

The fundamental thrust of the new world order is built on the culture of building peace which according to the Social Science Research council, (2004) to achieve this, the United Nations has identified some major task as parts of this peace building.

These include the following:

- De-militarisation of combatants;

- Re-establishing rule of law;
- Reconstruction of civil society
- Return of refugees and internally displaced persons
- Economic support (P: 3)

The question then is what can social studies do to sustain this agenda? It is natural that issues of peace and stability in the society are issues of values. Social studies being a value laden discipline can effectively incorporate all these peace achieving elements and ensure their internationalization by members of the society through the process of education.

### **GLOBALIZATION, CURRICULUM AND INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING**

The key concept is globalization, which deserves explanation for further understanding of others. As a worldwide social concept, globalization is crucial in understanding international political economy for it directs attention to fundamental changes in the post-cold war era. It is *a* concept, which interrelates multiple levels of analysis such as economics, politics, culture and ideology. It is a worldwide phenomenon, which coalesces varied transnational processes and domestic structures, "allowing the economy, politics, culture and ideology of one country to be penetrated by another" (Griffin, Rahman & Khan, 1992).

On the other hand, Kennedy (2003) making reference to Wallerstein (2000) and Chanda (2002) observed that at the core of any understanding of globalization as a construct is integration and this could take many forms: economic, social, cultural or political. This integration has been occurring over time and what makes it particularly salient is the pace at which it moves. That technology is a remarkable feature of globalization thereby making

integration to occur in "real time". This is what distinguishes globalization from constructs like "global", "World-wide" or "International".

Kennedy (2003) refers to the "real time" integration of economics, societies, culture and political systems as "the older form of globalization". He further pointed out that amidst contest and challenges of the old globalization as a social and political process is that has led to the new globalization characterized by the use of terror and war rather than financial services or flow of ideas. But Goldstone (2002: p. 3) put it this way: It represents an attempt to lift a religion war to a global scale, by striking a highly visible and destructive blow that would herald the "clash of civilization". It is a new globalization championed by a new set of antagonist. Just like Fukuyama (2002: p.2) suggested that it represents the clash of "super charged individuals" and nation-states.

The dimension of the new globalization is different from the old one for the new version, government of nation states are challenged as it is a form of terrorism, based on extensive international networks spread across borders. It is fuelled by a religious ideology that seeks world domination without compromise. It is observed that the new globalization has chosen as its means terror, destruction and war to achieve integration whereas the older one worked through economics, culture, social and political systems. For both form, there is no recognition or borders, no negotiation or tolerance of difference, no accommodation for historical circumstances and contexts and no acceptance of the legitimacy of nation states as arbiters on behalf of other citizens. Globalization moves relentlessly towards alone world order with the tensions of the new version ensuring a continuous contest (Kennedy 2003: p.6).

From the above, the questions to ask are: what is the role of the curriculum in shaping the negative forces of globalization? Has the school curriculum anything to offer? Let me refer to Lawton and Dufour (1976) when the world was caught in the idealism of the post

1945 world war and determined to construct a better society out of the catastrophe from which mankind had just emerged, educationists then had to turn their thoughts to the curriculum, Sought for a more relevant, liberal education as the panacea, which would furnish a greater understanding of mankind and enable the pupils as adults to become socially conscious and responsible members of the society. It is in this circumstance that Kennedy (2002) advocated for social, civic and citizenship education.

In his rethinking of social education in times of uncertainty, he observed that there have been some calls from social educators in the United States on response to the events of September 11 that provide some indications of a curriculum response. These responses range from the philosophical which according to Berson (2002) noted that:

*The ultimate goal is to combat the doctrine of despair by instilling on our youths the idea that people have the power to spread compassion, understanding and hope throughout our nation and the global community, (p. 144)*

It is therefore advised that any response needs to go beyond the academic disciplines "to address world-wide problems. On this note, there is a list of "curriculum prescriptions" needed to reorient the curriculum as offered by (Diem, 2002: P. 147).

- To teach beyond borders;
- Provide instruction in cultural understanding;
- Help students understand the effect of propaganda;
- Develop historical perspectives;
- Show the effects of changes in interpreting the concept of civil liberties: and
- Develop critical thinking skills.

All these are the various approaches of rethinking the social studies curriculum, which further provide an important perspective for citizenship education. This is where education for international understanding comes to view.

It should be appreciated the world over today that all men and women share the conviction that if man is to survive, he would need to achieve a world perspective of an understanding, a tolerance and sympathy for international traditions and patterns of behaviour found throughout the world (Elliot & Pring 1975). Teachers at every level of the curriculum ought to view their profession in an international context; to strive to foster in their pupils an awareness of supranational loyalties as the necessary condition for legitimate fulfilment of national ones. Such education for international understanding must concern itself, not only with man's political and economic activities but also with the basic beliefs he holds about his own nature.

In the past decades, major disasters or threat of disasters have thrown the people of the planet earth into attempt at mutual understanding and cooperation. International orgies of war have been succeeded by periods of sober reflection during which nations have sworn to secure fuller, happier, more sympathetic and more peaceful understanding between people of their world. Despairing of the ignorance, prejudice and antipathies of their own generations, they have looked up to the new generation, children to build a better world of the future, and their education to equip them for this not inconsiderable task of education for international understanding.

The curriculum should therefore contribute in some ways to international understanding, which represents several interconnected but distinguishable ideas. The focus is no the following:

- i. International understanding in the sense of knowledge and understanding which people of different nations should have about each other's society.

- ii. International understanding in the sense of knowledge about things international, about international relations, systems of world order, international and supranational organization and institutions; and
- iii. International understanding as a characterization of the kind of understanding we should have of, e.g. our own lives, moral responsibilities, historical explanation and understanding that is with the mark of a world or global perspective.

### **CURRENT CHALLENGES SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM**

There is a need to remake; rethink and reorient the social studies curriculum within the framework of globalized social system. However, the compelling forces of globalization call for much newer challenges for the discipline content. The implication here is that social studies must keep pace with the trend of modernization and innovations in the classroom and the society experiencing global interdependence. These innovations and modernizations are essentially social, economic and political. This according to Oloyade (1999) demands new knowledge and skills for citizens living in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. To this extent, social studies curriculum planners must rethink, reappraise and overhaul the curriculum to bear with contemporary social issues and in response to what Gerg, Rke and Selby (1991) viewed as proliferation of educations under inclusive titles as "World Studies" or "Global education". These include development education, human rights education, values education, peace education, environmental education, child rights education, gender studies, minority education and democracy education among others.

These identified challenges of social studies curriculum are very sensitive areas of global concern that directly deals with man and his inter group relationship and the environment. Each specific area mentioned can be fully developed into a broad and distinct area within the social studies curriculum structure.

They are all processes of culture nurturing that also involve articulating principles of Pedagogic socialization of individuals. A good social studies programme tailored to make the above issues functional in the curriculum can contribute to the global democratic revolution through citizenship education, which can be predicated in terms of civic virtues, duties and obligations and legal status.

## **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Social studies is a child of necessity aimed at fulfilling certain missions for any society. Its recence in the Nigerian School System should be appreciated by teachers, educational practitioners, government and students by being given the encouragement in terms of funding and other material supports. By its peculiar nature and characteristics it should be taught in schools in line with the prevailing social values. The new challenges of this discipline within the globalization framework though somehow superficially mentioned in one contend are or this is no enough to contend with the recent blaze of globalization. The emphasis here is that there is need to remark social studies curriculum content bearing in mind these emerging social issues.

Similarly, the following recommendations are made:

1. Remaking and overhauling of the curriculum content of social studies to accommodate the new challenges of globalization is very important;
2. There is a need to promote human resource development in the new identified areas through training by the government appropriate gencies.
3. To achieve global peace and stability, and to produce a world citizen, the new curriculum should begin at the rudimentary levels of education so that the young ones would internalize these peace building values as they grow up.

4. Governments of various Nations-states should do their utmost best to invest in this curriculum by providing material and financial supports to schools.

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