

## Objectives and Learning Resources for Social Education

By

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A quick look at the world we live in will reveal that many of our most serious problems are social in nature. Modern history has brought a growing and even life-threatening imbalance between scientific and technological progress and social progress. This situation caused Lester Ward to cry out: "Is it true that man shall ultimately obtain dominion of the whole world except himself?" Or, a character in *The Late George Apley* made the same observation more humourously: "When everything is totalled up, we have evolved a fine variety of flushing toilets but not a very good world"<sup>1</sup> In Nigeria, however much faith we may place in science and technology for solving problems, brief reflection will reveal that social aspects present the greater challenge. The Nigeria Educational Research Council (NERC) draws the connection between society's problems and social studies when it states:

Some of the major problem areas of modern Nigeria such as ethnic groupings, statism, corruption, desperate poverty, hunger, indiscipline, unemployment, and under-development, show the need to give realistic education to those who will help form the society of the future... The aims of education should be to create not so much specialists, as people who know how to live responsibly in society.<sup>2</sup>

Teaching how to live responsibly in society is the purpose of social education. The social studies represent an attempt to create a unified study of man in his social and physical environments. It integrates the various social sciences: sociology, anthropology, history, geography, economics, political science, psychology, as well as aspects of religion. The social studies are concerned with the " manifold aspects of Man's social, political, economic, and spiritual life"<sup>3</sup>. Social studies courses have been accepted in primary schools and teacher training institutions. Secondary schools approach social studies through separate disciplines, primarily history, geography, economics, and political science. Social studies, being the study of man in his total social and physical setting, resources should not be restricted to a few areas. Particularly on the secondary level, where crucial aspects of social studies may be omitted from the curriculum, resource specialists must think, not in terms of narrow curricular needs, but of the broad objectives of social education.

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## OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL EDUCATION

Aside from attempting to prepare young people for effective and responsible living, there are specific objectives of social education? These have been well summarized by the primary school syllabus for Lagos State (1971):

1. To acquire a body of knowledge relating to man as a social being
2. To further... the civic and social responsibility of an individual. and cultivation of desirable attitudes
3. To develop the skills and abilities required for effective social living.<sup>4</sup>

The familiar division into cognitive, affective and psychomotor objectives, are relevant for social studies resources. This can be used as framework for discussion of the above syllabus, in greater detail.

### COGNITIVE OBJECTIVES: SOCIAL REALITIES

To acquire a body of knowledge relating to man as a social being for unless a pupil is equipped with an understanding of certain basic principles and concepts relating to the organized life of man in society, he will lack the fundamental background for an intelligent and a realistic approach to the social problems of his time and their issues.

Cognitive objectives involve the acquiring of knowledge, information, facts, ideas and concepts. These should be easily recognized, since cognitive objectives have often been emphasized to the exclusion of all others. But understanding cognitive objectives as primarily the memorization of facts is too narrow a view. There has been a shift in emphasis from learning all the essential facts to developing concepts which can be applied to a variety of situations. The list of possible concepts is vast.

Some have been derived from a particular discipline, for instance –

the concept of –	is associated with –
scarcity	economics
power	political science
social change	sociology
culture	anthropology-
habitat	geography.

All these have applications beyond the discipline of origin, but other concepts are too general to assign to any one area, for example –

- conflict – its origin, expression and resolution
- compromise and adjustment

comparative advantage  
morality and choice  
interaction — competition and cooperation.<sup>5</sup>

Concepts provide a means of organizing factual material; they are important general ideas which can be applied to a variety of particular situation. For example, students could use the sociological concepts of social class, status, role and norms to analyze the society of colonial America, ancient India, or present day Nigeria. While learning the specifics of a particular society, students would acquire understandings or generalizations which could be applied to any society and could increase their understanding of the world.

#### **AFFECTIVE OBJECTIVES: SOCIETAL GOALS**

To further the ends in the civic and social responsibility of an individual through experiences and activities shared with others, and cultivation of desirable attitudes towards other persons, groups, authority or social problems.

A look at the stated objectives for any social studies course will reveal the importance attached to affective objectives. The social studies are seen as a way, not only of acquiring knowledge and understanding of social realities but of furthering societal goals. These goals can be identified by consulting such documents as the National Policy on Education and the Constitution, where for example, such goals as unity and harmony, freedom, equality and justice are stressed. Unfortunately, "there is no doubt that a lot of what young people see in our society today hardly reflects the ideals indicated in the national education and developmental statements."<sup>17</sup> If we wish to achieve these ideals, it is necessary both to give young people a realistic view of the society and to instill attitudes and values which will help bring about its improvement. The social studies provide opportunities for raising important social and moral questions, such as the effects of poverty, racism and injustice, and can encourage such qualities as tolerance, courage and empathy.

The affective objectives relevant to social studies which are found in the National Policy on Education<sup>8</sup> can be organised around the three basic values of a democratic social order:

1. *"Worth and dignity of the individual" (3.1),*  
Which is supported by such aims as building "a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens" (1.5), "promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children" (3.6), teaching "respect (for) the views and feelings of others" (18e), and "inculcating moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relations." (3.3)
2. *"Shared responsibility for the Common Good of Society" (3.4),*  
which includes "inculcating social norms" (10d), and "equalities like public-spiritedness, voluntary service, sense of responsibility, loyalty, sense of fairplay, honest, and self-sacrifice for the good of others," (25.2) and "fostering Nigerian unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity." (18f)
3. *"Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions" (3.2),*  
which includes "laying a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking" (14b), "developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment" (14e), and "rais(ing) a generation of people who can think for themselves." (18e)

Few would question the importance of these objectives, but the question of how to attain them remains. They are not well suited to the most common methods of teachings. Little is achieved by including the appropriate value on a list of items to be memorized or sprinkling moralisms throughout social studies books. A commitment to community service, for instance, can be encouraged by inspiring examples of what communities or individuals have been able to accomplish or by opportunities to take an effective part in community life. These considerations should influence the selection of resources in this area.

#### PSYCHOMOTOR OBJECTIVES: SKILLS AND ABILITIES

To develop the skills and abilities required for effective social living, including those most desirable for the collection, organization, and the critical evaluation of knowledge and information needed for any effective action.

**Emphasis in education** has shifted, not only from facts to concepts, as noted in the discussion of cognitive objectives, but also from acquiring information to developing skills of handling information. This shift is the result of several developments, notably the knowledge explosion and the development of educational psychology. The relevant skills includes:

1. *Definition of Problems:* Being aware of discrepancies between ideals and practice, or end and means, or obstacles to achieving goals, and being able to suggest hypotheses.
2. *Collection of Data:* Acquiring library skills, effective note-making, use of maps and charts, visual and listening skills, and the use of social science techniques such as observing and recording data, conducting interviews and surveys.
3. *Organization:* Presentation of findings using skills in outlining, writing, footnoting, summarizing, graphic presentation and oral presentations.
4. *Critical Evaluation:* Being able to think critically about social phenomena, to distinguish fact from opinion, to detect subjective elements, to shift relevant and irrelevant data, to evaluate evidence, to compare viewpoints, to weigh alternative courses of action and arrive at sound conclusions.
5. *Working With People:* Learning to work in groups to exchange and discuss views.

The resources of the library are better suited to the acquisition of learning skills than are those of the typical classroom, where the principal resources are text book and teacher. A variety of materials afford students the opportunity to pursue research, to evaluate evidence, compare viewpoints and develop critical thinking.

#### **THE ROLE OF LEARNING RESOURCES**

Having examined the objectives of social education in some details, let us turn now to the resources which might be employed in attaining these objectives.

### *Reference Works:*

A number of basic reference works have special relevance to social studies. A standard encyclopedia is the first source for information on almost any topic. Annuals and yearbooks can provide basic facts and statistics on a number of countries and subjects. Atlases and gazettes are basic to social science work. Reference works are especially valuable, not only for the information contained but for the opportunities they provide for learning how to learn.

### *Nonfiction:*

Nonfiction resources for social studies should include a variety of materials, only one of which should be text books, while useful as guides, are almost inevitably superficial in treatment and lacking in colourful detail. Supplementary books should be used to fill in the detail and bring the subject to life. This is a very difficult area to fill: there is often little between the student's text book and scholarly or full length adult works that is relevant to local circumstances. What is most needed in our schools are short books on single topics or books with distinct chapters.

*Tarikh*, a journal for African history intended for secondary schools, is a good example of the required type of materials. At the primary school level, I would like to support Prof. Ikime's call for "topic books" on such subjects as Nigerian peoples, age grades and title societies, geographic features including mountains, rivers, cities, and towns, vegetational zones, and biographies, to mention just a few.<sup>11</sup>

Biography is a class of nonfiction which deserves special mention. Most subjects are more interesting to children, and to most of us, if they are presented on a personal level. More over, biographies are especially suitable for the area of affective objectives in that they offer models for desired values. For instance, to use examples from a distant time and place, a figure like Sir Thomas More provides a model for integrity and courage and affirms the worth and dignity of the individual in spite of oppressive forces. Or, Elizabeth I of England and Henry IV of France, two tolerant leaders in an age of intolerance, can teach much about the use of power, about compromise and adjustment, about the resolution of conflict — concepts we touched on earlier. Nigerian historians and writers have the task of researching great figures from the Nigerian or African past and making such information available to students of all levels.

### *Fiction:*

Fiction may not figure prominently on reading lists as texts for social studies, but this class of materials, like biography, can make important contributions, in the cognitive and affective areas. Works of fictions provide a vivid portrayal of a particular setting and so can offer motivation and a feel for a distant time or place. For example, a book like *Nectar in a Sieve* can be used to convey information about life in India. It can help build concepts such as culture, social change, compromise and adjustment and habitat. Most important, its moving portrayal of the courage and perseverance of ordinary people in the face of adversity and of love and adjustment in a marriage relationship offer inspiration and create sympathy for other members of the human family. Fiction has a special role to play because of the insight it offers into human relationships and the ability of literature to move us.

Fiction can serve the purposes of social education outside the classroom and can provide resources for social studies classes. In particular, short stories and selections from full length novels can be used in the classroom to raise questions, enhance interest, or emphasize the human element. We are relatively fortunate in this area, at least at the secondary school level, because of the quality of modern African fiction available.

To give an example, the short story "*Vengeful Creditor*" (Achebe) touches on many Nigerian social issues. The cost of abortive plans for free primary education are shown in terms of a 10 year old girl who is withdrawn from school and sent to serve as a baby nurse for a family of civil servants. This story can develop concepts like social stratification, roles and status and can raise questions about the effects of poverty (and wealth) on character or the possibility of genuine relations between inequals. Finally, I think most people would finish this story feeling disturbed by self-satisfaction and insensitivity on the part of the privileged and wanting to wipe out all forms of social injustice. Similarly, "*Cut Me a Drink*" (Aidoo), the story of a young man sent to the city in search of a long-lost sister, brings out differences in rural and urban conditions and customs, the effects of social change, and the human cost to some individuals. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (Armah) with its portrayal of integrity in the face of corruption and false values, and *Houseboy* (OYONO) with its devastating depiction of colonialism, offer two more examples out of many.

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### *Newspapers and Magazines:*

Newspaper and magazine articles provide another valuable source of materials for social studies. Files of clippings from several Nigerian newspapers covering a period of several years could meet a variety of social studies needs. Some articles provide useful information in the form of documents (the constitution, budget speech, reports with government statistics), news items ("*Federal Government May Review Abortion Law*", "*Coed System Abolished in Anambra*", "*Women Can't Contest LG Election*"), special features (biographical sketches of El Kanemi, Jaja of Opobo, Madam Tinubu, Usman Dan Fodio, "*Archaeologists' Chest at a Glance*") or discussions of social problems ("*How to Solve our Housing Problems*", "*170,000 Patients Chasing 630 Beds*", "*The Carnage on Nigerian Roads*", etc.). Certain caution is necessary, however, in using newspaper articles as accurate information: the policies announced in the last two news items were never carried out and so might be misleading in a clipping file. Articles presenting issues vary widely in quality: they may be well reasoned and documented, or they may be prejudiced and incoherent. For this reason, many articles prove valuable for purposes other than information gathering. Articles presenting a point of view on social issues may be used effectively to provoke thought and discussion. Editorials and letters to the editor are also useful in this way. Finally, unsupported assertions, bias, propaganda techniques, and faulty reasoning can all be detected in certain articles.

A useful approach to critical evaluation is to compare two articles on the same subject but written from different points of view. One example is Fenton's juxtaposition of a *Time Magazine* article and a Moscow radio broadcast describing the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.<sup>12</sup>

Others are comparing accounts of the liberation struggle in Angola written by *Newsweek* and a journalist sympathetic to the MPLA, or analysis of Ethiopia in 1969-70 appearing in conservative and radical magazines. Such comparisons lead to a study of evidence and analysis of viewpoint. Sometimes, as in the Ethiopia stories, the facts were almost identical but the interpretation and conclusions were very different.

### *Source Materials:*

The discussion of newspaper and magazine articles brings us directly to the subject of source materials, which can sometimes be used in similar ways. Source materials are particularly relevant to the study of history. They include written materials (letters, diaries, eyewitness



accounts, autobiographies, reports, government documents, and literature), pictorial materials (artwork, photographs, cartoons, maps) and oral materials (speeches, songs, inter-views, recordings of events). In this section, I will consider the written materials.

A study of sources is basic to new approaches in history and social studies which emphasize the methods of the discipline, such as historical method. It is part of the move towards teaching skills for handling information, the psychomotor objectives listed earlier. By learning how to select relevant materials, what to look for in data, how to draw conclusions, and how to evaluate materials in terms of value judgement and bias, the student can gain reasoning ability and a broad perspective. In addition, sources, when carefully selected, can "make history live" by giving the flavour of the times or evoking a strong emotional response.

This is an area of almost endless possibilities. To give just one example of the possibilities, let me list a few of the sources used in Leon E. Clark's series *Through African Eyes*, a series intended to acquaint American children with African through an inquiry and conceptual approach.<sup>13</sup> Sources include: autobiographies describing growing up, the experience of a slave (Equiano), and social change; literature (selections from Laye, Oyono, Senghor, Achebe, Beti); selections from Ibn Battuta's travels; letters from a king of Congo to Portugal; memories of a slaver; conflicting accounts of an encounter between Africans and Europeans; testimony from a government report on the Hut Tax War; a bishop's circular and FRELIMO Leaflet from Mozambique; letters to a newspaper advice column. The challenge remains to identify sources suitable for Nigerian social studies and to facilitate their use through compilations and support materials for teachers. Some collections, such as Thomas Hodgkin's *Nigerian Perspectives* (OUP, 1975) and Basil Davidson's *The African Past* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1967) are already available. A good example of a file of materials (similar to the Jackdaw series) produced for the study of African history is *Safari: Records of East Africa's Past* compiled by A. Roberts and published by OUP NERCZAM: it includes Swahili poetry, facsimile of a document in Arabic, maps, biographies, posters with information and photographs.

#### *Audiovisual Resources:*

Certain source materials are audio visual resources as well and will be considered here. Visual resources come in many forms, including those source materials listed above and a wide variety of pictures and charts. Audio resources include the oral materials already listed as well

as re-enactments and broadcasts. A few examples will show some applications to social studies.

The cave paintings of Tassili, portraying ancient life in the Sahara, provide an excellent source for an inquiry lesson. They could be introduced as part of an examination of how the historian knows about societies which have no written records. The teacher could then show photographs or slides of the paintings, asking students to discover as much as possible about life in the ancient Sahara. Students should be able to notice the difference in the environment, types of wildlife, occupations and recreation. Certain paintings, of a mask and woman's braided hairdo, show something of the continuity of culture. Other paintings may raise more questions than they answer; this can lead to discussion of incomplete or unclear evidence and other sources a historian might use.

Another topic in West African history, one which can use a great variety of sources, is the Saharan trade. Here, recent photographs can be used to reconstruct the trade: salt basins, camel caravans, ancient trading cities, markets. Further information can be drawn from a map with overlays showing the zones of trade and location of empires. Finally, the accounts of Arab travellers and the findings of historians could be examined. A similar range of materials can be used with the Swahili culture of East Africa, as was done in the Safari file.

Audio resources are also valuable to social studies. For example, Martin Luther King's "I have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington offers a way of finding out much about race relations and the civil rights movement in the United States. The information provided can develop certain concepts (conflict, social change). Its use along with other source materials could lead to the development of learning skills. Finally, hearing the speech can be a moving experience, both because of the language and delivery and because of the values expressed and example shown.

Much can be done on a local level by improvisation. However, the establishment of centres to develop such materials as slides, films and recordings for use in schools would do much to improve social studies education.

#### STUDENT MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES

This examination of resources for social studies should not be concluded without mentioning the role of student-produced materials and the activities involved. The learning skills already discussed can often be learned best by doing. Students can themselves conduct interviews and make surveys; they can organize such material as resources for class use. The NERC social studies series for teacher training institutions provides many examples of such activities and represents a trend to be encouraged in social studies.<sup>14</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

In this paper, an attempt has never been made to relate the objectives of social education to the resources to be employed. The objectives discussed were of three types: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Examination of the resources revealed that various types could be used in achieving these objectives. For instance, biography and fiction proved especially important for affective objectives while sources and newspaper clippings contributed to learning skills and critical evaluation. The development of certain types of resources was recommended, in particular, the writing of topic books on Nigerian subjects, the compilation of source materials and their adaptation for classroom use, and the creation of audiovisual centres for the production of such resources as slides, films and recordings for schools. By taking such steps, we can improve the resources available for social and cultural studies and perhaps come closer to attaining the objectives of social education.

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