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Eclecticism: The Main Stay Of Social Studies

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Reasons of the Eclectic Nature of Social Studies

The genesis of eclecticism can be traced to the time of certain Greek thinkers who were generally grouped as eclectics. The name was later transferred to Leibniz and Cousin. All this was in the Second and First centuries B.C. Eclecticism, according to Chambers English Dictionary is “selecting or borrowing; choosing the best out of everything; broad, the opposite of exclusive”. The emphasis of Social Studies is getting the best out of other disciplines which will enhance the tack of Social Studies in understanding man and his environments which can be Social, economic, cultural, political, historical, religious, geographic, scientific and technological.

When mention is made of the borrowing nature of Social Studies, the mind easily goes to the time of Robinson Crusoe on his Island and the total failure of efforts made by him to create a completely independent and private empire by doing everything on his own. This fact accounts for the eclectic nature of Social Studies. For example, History provides the unique past records of man; political science focuses on attempts made at governance while economics concentrates on production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and services and a host of others. None of the aforementioned disciplines sees man in totality.

In line with the above is also the dynamic nature of Social Studies, dynamism is a gateway to new inventions and innovations. Dynamism entails flexibility. A flexible subject welcomes “best of every subject”. The broad nature of Social Studies curriculum also accounts for its eclectic nature. Since Social Studies blends the best from every subject together, the product of such combinations must be broad and complex. This is in agreement with the complex nature of man and his environment which are the focal points of Social Studies.

The complex nature of man and his environment is fully covered by the aims and objectives of teaching Social Studies which include the following:

- a. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- b. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian Society;
- c. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- d. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mentally and physically as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

Of not is the fact that Social Studies swings more to the direction of Social Sciences than the sciences. Thus, much similarity exists between Social Studies and disciplines like fall into the category of Social Sciences. The above is a testimony to the fact that Social Studies is better appreciated as a multi-disciplinary studies. As such, its teaching must, by implication, be eclectic as its contents are equally all-embracing.

Proving the Existence of Eclecticism in Social Studies

In doing this, emphasis will be on certain selected disciplines or subjects in Social Studies which have and are still contributing to much desired objective of Social Studies. These disciplines are:

- i. Sociology
- ii. Anthropology
- iii. Psychology
- iv. Political Science
- v. History

i. Sociology

Right from the time of Auguste Comte, Sociology has been popularly regarded as “the Science of the Society”. From this simple definition of Sociology, one would have noticed that much similarities exist between Social Studies and Sociology. They both focus on the Society as well as the people who populate such a society. Virtually all the concepts taught in Sociology have bearing with Social Studies. However, mention would be made of Socialization, Institution, Community and Cooperation as those Sociological concepts that are commonly mentioned and discussed in Social Studies.

ii. Anthropology

Anthropology shares a close boundary with sociology. From whatever angle Anthropology is viewed, it is entirely the study of culture. Some concepts in Anthropology which are borrowed by Social Studies are culture, Culture relativity, ethnocentrism acculturation and enculturation. Culture relativity, ethnocentrism knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Taylor, 1871). Individuals as well as societal culture is part of the contents of Social Studies. Culture is taught in Social Studies in order to enrich one's understanding of his culture as well as culture from another land. An understanding of man and roles of culture to other culturally related topics are discussed in Social Studies. Cultural relativity is another anthropological concept. It is a social-scientific perspective of understanding that since every culture represents an adjustment to a unique set of circumstances; one cannot judge one culture from the perspective of, or with the standard of another particularly in a matter of morality. This, along with ethnocentrism and enculturation are embedded in Social Studies' curriculum at whatever level, Ethnocentrism and enculturation are two sides of the same coin. While ethnocentrism refers to judging other people's culture from the understanding of one's own culture, enculturation refers to actual transfer of one's own culture to another culture. The two are given prominence in Social Studies as they aid a full understanding of culture which in turn explains the basic and functional existence of man.

iii. Psychology

Psychology is defined as the scientific study and understanding of man's and animal behavior. Such study is meant to further justify the predictive and perceptive power of psychology. Since the study of

behavior is the focal point of psychology, its relationship with disciplines in Social Sciences is understandable. Self concept, motivation, perception and attitude are some of the psychological concepts which are equally studied in Social Studies. Self concept for example refers to one's impression of oneself. How one sees and evaluates oneself, one's image.

Motivation also means any device used by the teacher to ginger learners into action. This is not restricted to student-teacher relationships alone. It's device that can be employed by an individual or group that is interested in getting the best from other people. Perception means the combining of sensation into a recognition of an object. On the other hand, attitude implies any condition of things or relation of persons viewed as expressing some thought or feeling. A cursory look at the above psychological concepts will depict a true picture of man as an emotional being. Emotionality occupies an enviable position in the Social Studies Curriculum development.

iv. Political Science

Political Science is the study of the art of governance. It examines man as governable and able to organize government. Such concept like political socialization, authority power and state are vividly studied in political science. Political socialization in the language of Scimecca (1977) refers to "political education" or "civic education". Power refers to the "ability to influence a social organization and get people to do things, even against their will. Power and authority are also in close contact. Authority on the other hand implies "legitimated power". A state is presented as a Social institution or organization possessing a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory; the highest (most inclusive) independent political unit. The Curriculum of Social Studies especially at tertiary institution level is laden with the concept above. This is done for the purpose of finding out "how man influence his environment and how he is equally influenced by the environment – reciprocal relationship.

v. History

The study of unique past events is done in History. Concepts like conflict, revolution, nationalism and exploration are taught in History. Conflict refers to the type interaction intended to destroy, injure, control, or thwart another party and arising from conditions of scarcity or incompatible or mutually exclusive goals. Revolution equally refers to an action intended to bring permanent change into the society. Nationalism which is the determination to protect the national integrity of a state is also studied in History and Social Studies. Exploration means touring areas of historical importance either for information or historical discovery. The teaching of Social Studies is made richer when the history concepts above and others are incorporated in it. Nationalism, revolution and related concepts derived from History when fully incorporated into the teaching of Social Studies makes the objectives of Social Studies teaching achievable.

PROSPECT OF ECLECTISM IN SOCIAL STUDIES

No doubt, eclecticism accounts from the richness of Social Studies Curriculum at whatever level the subject is taught. Eclecticism explains the flexible nature of Social Studies's curriculum. Eclecticism welcomes contribution from diverse subject contents. This diverse contribution negates the holistic study of man which accounted for the failure of other disciplines in Social Sciences before the advent of Social Studies.

The flexible nature of Social Studies accounts for the discovery of new emerging areas in Social Studies. This indeed is a testimony to the fact that man as well as his environment are not static. Thus, such new conceptual innovations like population education, sex education, drug abuse, child abuse and environmental education have been fully integrated into Social Studies's curriculum. To further enhance the eclectic nature of Social Studies, its teaching should also be eclectic. By this, its teaching should not be monopolized by a single individual teacher as no teacher can be all in all. Historians, geographers, political scientists, and other specialists should be invited to teach Social Studies as certain concepts as demonstrated above are peculiar to certain disciplines which come under the umbrella of Social Studies.

Equally of importance for the success of eclecticism in Social Studies is the need for this to reflect in selection of Instructional materials for its teaching. Such materials are to be derived from contributory disciplines just like its contents. Thus, much professional expertise is expected to be dissipated on the selection of these materials for its teaching. Such materials are to be derived from contributory disciplines just like its contents. Thus, much professional expertise is expected to be dissipated on the selection of these materials to ensure that those materials are reflective of its eclectic nature.

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