CHAPTER 1

THE NATURE OF
SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION
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1.1 Definition

A Curriculum Framework for Social Studies: Navigating the Future considers Social Studies as an area of study that explores human interactions, spatially and temporally, and how they effect and are affected by the physical and cultural environment. It derives its content and methods of inquiry from the social sciences, humanities, and the pure sciences.

The two broad dimensions of Social Studies education are the development of the person and of the citizen. Social Studies contributes to the "fullest and best development" of the learners as set forth by the Aims of Public Education for Newfoundland and Labrador (1984). The expectation implies a mastery of fundamental competencies, fostered by a knowledge and appreciation of the learner's heritage.

Citizenship education, as a primary focus of Social Studies, promotes desirable participatory citizenship on the part of the learner.

In the Newfoundland and Labrador context, this has been characterized
as being "... citizens who are able to make independent and rational judgements on public issues and posses [dispositions] which are consistent with a respect for the personal and civic rights of others" (The Nature of Knowledge in Social Studies, 1978, p. 19). However, such learners would possess the knowledge and self-confidence in his/her own abilities to think independently; qualities which will enhance personal development. These two broad dimensions of Social Studies should not be viewed separately but rather as qualities which are primarily inner-directed (personal development) or primarily outer-directed (good citizenship).

There is a symbiotic relationship between personal development and the qualities of participatory citizenship. This relationship may be illustrated as follows:

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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The close interrelations between personal qualities and citizenship competencies may be further amplified as follows:

**Relationship Between Personal Development and Citizenship**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Development Qualities</th>
<th>Good Citizenship Qualities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>! has a critical and inquiring mind with self-confidence</td>
<td>! analyzes and evaluates public issues based upon their own powers of reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>! has such personal qualities as honesty, empathy, and a sense of justice</td>
<td>! displays public attitudes which promote the development of a democratic society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>! is concerned about the welfare of others</td>
<td>! shows willingness to take an active role in promoting the public good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>! has personal qualities that are amenable to change</td>
<td>! takes an active role in helping society re-define its expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>! retains a sense of personal and group identity when basing decisions on experience of the past</td>
<td>! shows respect for traditions and institutions, and places public issues in appropriate historical-cultural context</td>
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**1.2 The Mission For Social Studies**

The overall mission for Social Studies education is two-fold:

To provide an enabling process whereby learners develop such personal qualities as knowing, inquiring, reflecting, and valuing; and to promote personal development as a catalyst for positive participation in the provincial, national, and global community.
1.3 A Rationale for Social Studies Education

The justification for the inclusion of Social Studies in the curriculum is recognized in the literature on education. The *Aims of Public Education for Newfoundland and Labrador* (1984) does not specifically address individual content areas, but at least two aims clearly establish a mandate for the inclusion and contribution of Social Studies into the provincial curriculum. **Aim A**, views education as the process by which human beings are enabled to achieve their fullest and best development both as private individuals and as members of human society. **Aim C(e)** highlights the need for learners to have a knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of their human heritage, as well as a desire to make a positive contribution to it, and a knowledge and appreciation of the natural environment.

The *Handbook for Senior High Schools* (1980) specifically names Social Studies (with other curriculum areas) as a field which deals with "the application of Judeao-Christian principles of life", "the development of moral values", "opportunities to practice democratic principles", and "an understanding of our cultural heritage" (pp. 12-14). The Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Delivery of Programs and Services in Primary, Elementary, Secondary Education, *Our Children, Our Future* (1992), sets out four principles for fostering citizenship competencies and inducting learners into a common core of knowledge and values. These principles include (1) empowering the learner to seize upon the goal of creating a better world, (2) providing learning experiences that facilitate the understandings and appreciations essential to achieving this goal, (3) enabling learners to make rational decisions, and (4) preparing learners to assume personal responsibility and become confident and enterprising individuals.
These principles, as guides for education, mirror the essential ingredients that characterize sound Social Studies education. Social Studies, as articulated in this document, is concerned with personal development predisposing the learner to become a participative and an informed citizen. As Harris (1990) suggested, "we have an absolute abiding demand and need for self-knowledge - we must know ourselves or we are nothing" (p. 1). Social Studies contains the memory of human experience and, if forgotten or ignored, "... we cease in that measure to be human. Without the history we have no knowledge of who we are or how we came to be, like victims of collective amnesia groping in the dark for our identity" (Daniels, 1966, p. 3).

Without geography, we have a limited sense of our place on earth. In order to exist and develop culturally, we need to understand our physical and climatic habitat, and examine the "reciprocal relationships that exist between people and their environment; how people adapt to and, more importantly, modify their environment" (Schuncke, 1988, p. 46). The field of economics contributes to our ability to address the universal problem of the desire to satisfy unlimited wants with limited resources. The ways in which people produce, distribute, exchange, and consume goods and services seek to match human wants with needs.

The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has highlighted, in its statement of economic vision, the need for economic literacy. More specifically, the Province sees a need for "... an enterprising, educated, distinctive, and prosperous people working together to create a competitive economy based on innovation, creativity, productivity, and quality" (Change and Challenge: A Strategic Economic Plan for
Newfoundland and Labrador, June 1992, p. 13). The first step towards the fulfilment of this vision is a fuller understanding of economic principles and their application in a changing society.

A well rounded Social Studies curriculum, provides a judicious balance between product, or what is learned, learning and process, or how a learner acquires and uses knowledge. Social Studies education has its place in developing learners to become both informed and predisposed to acting upon this knowledge. To achieve its overall goals, Social Studies promotes learning experiences that have both a distinct content focus and process focus. The latter provides opportunities for learners to become actively involved with summarizing, translating, interpreting, judging, and utilizing knowledge. According to Welton and Mallan (1992), "when teachers do not help [learners] to process or think about information, they are neglecting one of the reasons for teaching Social Studies" (p. 21).

1.4 Sources of Social Studies Knowledge

The knowledge and methods of inquiry for Social Studies are derived from (1) history and the social science disciplines of geography, economics, political science, anthropology, sociology, and social psychology; (2) a variety of specializations within the disciplines, such as archaeology and cultural anthropology; (3) related elements from the humanities - philosophy, religion, ethics, law, linguistics, literature, and the arts; and (4) an amalgam of content from the pure sciences.

This Framework promotes history, geography, and economics as the three major disciplines in Social Studies since they directly
promote the development of temporal and spatial competencies, and sustainable living. History gathers and evaluates relevant traces of past events and provides Social Studies with the key concepts of chronology, continuity, change, cause and effect, objectivity, invention, bias, exploration, colonization, civilization, leadership, and historical records.

The fundamental themes of geography were identified by the Joint Committee on Geographic Education (1984) as (1) location: position of the earth's surface; (2) place: physical and human characteristics; (3) relationships within places: humans and environments; (4) movement: humans interacting on the earth; and (5) regions: how they form and change. The key concepts of geography promoted in the Social Studies curriculum include landforms, urbanization, habitat, spacial interaction, region, location, diffusion, topography, population density, areal differentiation, ecosystem, climate, demographics, migration, resources, and sustainable economic development.

Economics is the study of how we use resources to satisfy wants and needs. Social Studies supports such key economic concepts as scarcity, production, distribution, consumption, cost, price, supply, demand, needs and wants, labour, exchange, inflation, and sustainability.

Other fields of study, such as political science, anthropology, sociology, and social psychology contribute essential understandings and competencies to Social Studies. Political science is the study of how we attempt to establish and maintain order in society by investigating relationships between power and those subjected to it. It contributes such key concepts as government, federalism, nation,
Anthropology is the study of culture, how it is established and how it functions. Physical anthropology examines the biological variations among different peoples. Cultural anthropology focuses on what humans have done and are doing to adapt and survive in their environments. Concepts of importance to Social Studies include culture, archaeology, cultural diffusion, language, ethnology, acculturation, ritual, tradition, customers, innovation, and artifacts (Schuncke, 1988).

Sociology is the study of groups and how they function. The subdisciplines of Sociology include "the economic, organizational, political, rural, and urban sociology; the sociology of knowledge, law, religion, and medicine; human ecology, the history of social thought; sociometry and other small-group research; survey research; and special fields such as criminology and demography" (Welton & Mallan, 1992, p. 54). Sociology contributes such key concepts as groups, socialization, society, social status, social class, social roles, social mobility, segregation, role expectations, stratification, family, norms, and power.

Social psychology is the study of group behaviour. Social psychology exposes the learner to understand such concepts as learning, achievement, self-concept, behaviour, attitudes, personality, perception, motives, aggression, habits, traits, instinct, conditioning, reinforcement, punishment.
The social sciences, then, are "... constructs developed to aid in the scholarly pursuit of knowledge, with the content and findings from the social sciences furnishing the raw materials - the knowledge base - on which Social Studies programs are built" (Welton & Mallan, 1992, p. 61). The content selected from the social sciences and related disciplines is shaped by the needs of the learner and the nature of society. Learners need knowledge of the contemporary world in which they live, and its historical antecedents. Learners also require a balance between knowledge of their own social environment and knowledge of the broader social world; between local, provincial, regional, national, international, and global issues; among past and present; among western and non-western cultures; and the "millennial megatrends that serve as gateways to the 21st century" (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1991, p. xix).

1.5 Essential Characteristics of a Social Studies Curriculum

An effective Social Studies curriculum can be defined by the following factors:

1. A well-developed Social Studies curriculum must be two-fold in nature. First, it must enhance the growth of the learner's understandings, competencies, and dispositions. Second, it encourages an engaged participation in activities designed to enhance the quality of life;
2. The essential knowledge incorporated into the instructional program at every level is directed toward the mission of Social Studies education and is organized to provide time for extended indepth study;

3. History, geography, and economics provide the foundational concept-matrix for Social Studies. Concepts and understandings from political science, sociology, and other social sciences provide essential learnings throughout the Social Studies curriculum;

4. Learners are encouraged to see the interrelationships among branches of the humanities and sciences, and integrate other subject matter with Social Studies;

5. Understandings acquired at the Canadian level and complemented by an examination of the global condition;

6. A complete Social Studies curriculum provides for consistent and cumulative learning from Primary through to Level III (Grade XII);

7. Content is not treated as an entity to be accepted and memorized, but as the means through which questions/issues may be explored and confronted;

8. Learning materials include original and secondary sources, literature, and expository writing, a variety of audiovisual material and interactive media, and items of culture;
9. The Social Studies curriculum recognizes the close relationship between the school and the community. The school acquires its resources from the community, and, in turn, the community provides the context for extending and validating learning experiences.

To conclude, Social Studies, in its attempt to develop the person for positive participation in the provincial, national, and global community, upholds the *Aims of Public Education for Newfoundland and Labrador* (1984). This *Framework* still promotes the scholarly pursuit of knowledge from the social sciences and related disciplines, but highlights learnings of instrumental worth. More specifically, it supports the more recent call in this Province for the development of those competencies and dispositions which enable the learner to become creative, innovative, productive, and flexible.