

SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper focuses on Social Studies Education as a tool for Nigeria national development. The paper x-rays the concept and nature of Social Studies, development of Social Studies in Nigeria and the concept of national development. It further examines the characteristics of Social Studies; Objectives of Social Studies; factors militating against national development as well as the contribution of Social Studies Education to national development in Nigeria which include, the inculcation of national consciousness, societal core values, fostering of national integration, awareness creation, political participation, development of critical thinking skills, respect for human dignity and development of moral values. Social Studies Education as a value-laden course of instruction helps to instill in the learner(s) the desired knowledge and skills required to achieve national educational aims and objectives which in turn metamorphose into national development.

Keywords: Social Studies, education, national development, society, Nigeria.

Introduction

Social Studies Education as an integrated field of study in the Nigerian education system serves as a subject that helps to discover societal problems and the means of solving these problems for the survival and continuous existence of the society. Social Studies teaches about peaceful co-existence and orderliness in our daily living as a progressive society. Hence the very importance of Social Studies Education in Nigeria national development cannot be over-stretched. Ideally, Odogbor (2010) views Social Studies Education as "an integrated field of study that attempts to study man in-depth within the ramification of his dynamic environments, as well as equipping him with positive knowledge, attitudes, values and adaptive interactive skills for the purpose of producing a socio-civically competent, humane and effective citizenry who can contribute positively to the good of the society.

In the words of Edinyang and Kalu (2016), Social Studies is viewed as a course which studies man's behaviour and his interaction with the other elements in his

environments, and seeks to help man achieve a meaningful life through the impartation of the right values, skills, attitudes and values which are acceptable in the society. Social Studies Education is a child-centered subject and it is tailored down to meeting the needs of the Nigerian society in achieving national development. The essence of Social Studies Education is to inculcate into the learner a reflective inquiry and problem-solving skills germane for social, economic, cultural, political, physical and technological transformation of the society, thereby enhancing national development.

According to the National Policy on Education (2004), Social Studies was introduced into the Nigerian school curriculum as part of the instrument for achieving national development. No wonder its designation as part of the core curriculum subject at different levels of education in Nigeria especially the primary and junior secondary education. Social Studies Education scholars as well as the National Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) identified the goals and purposes of Social Studies Education as domiciled in the school curriculum. These goals according to Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2008), include knowledge and information goal, reflective thinking goal, citizenship transmission goal and socio-political activism goal. These goals as stated must be seen as important and also attainable by all Nigerian citizens; the purposes and intentions must be realized and the investment of effort is to be considered worthwhile.

The Concept of Social Studies Education

At the very point of introducing Social Studies Education into the Nigerian school system, it was viewed as that part of subject area of the curriculum that has the wherewith to cultivate and produce good and patriotic citizens that would help enhance our national development drive and integration. Different scholars such as Fan (2003), Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2008), Edinyang, Mezieobi and Ubi (2013) and Edinyang and Effiom (2014) perceived Social Studies in different ways. Fan (2003), defined Social Studies as a problem-approach discipline through which man studies and learns about problems of survival in his environments. Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2008), viewed it as an integrative field of study which probes man's symbiotic relationships with his environments, endows man with the reflective or contemplative capacities, intellectual, affective, social and work skills, to enable him understand his world and its problems, and to rationally solve or cope with them for effective living in the society. To Edinyang, Mezieobi and Ubi (2013), Social Studies is described as the course of instruction which equips the learner with cognition, values, attitudes, and functional skills to survive in an ever-dynamic society. Accordingly, Edinyang and Effiom (2014), sees Social Studies as a subject used to describe the study of humanity, interactions of humans for peaceful co-existence, interdependence and inter-relationships for effective living in the society.

The authors viewed Social Studies Education as the process and outcomes of man's interactions and relationship with his different kinds of environments. The impression created by the scholars here by their definitions of the subject is that Social Studies do not yield itself to one particular definition. The common point here is that Social Studies Education is the study of man in his immediate environment and how man influence and is being influenced by his cultural, physical and social environments.

Furthermore, Arisi (2011), defined Social Studies as the study of man within his environments - physical, social, economic, psychological, religious, political, cultural, scientific and technological or the study of how man exists in his environment, deals with the multitude of factors that bear on his existence. Mosehin cited in Atang (2014), views it as a distinct integrated single subject that attempts to study virtually the totality of man's existence on earth purposely to encourage learners to acquire knowledge, skills and values needed for understanding and coping with various problems confronting man in the course of survival.

Social Studies Education may further be described as a subject that primarily concerns itself with the study of man, his immediate environments as well as the society where he lives and the outcome of the interactions between these three elements. To National Council for Social Studies (NCSS, 1992), Social Studies is defined as the integrated study of the social sciences and the humanities to promote civic competence. According to them, the main purpose of Social Studies is to help the young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.

More so, Abubakar (2013), observed that Social Studies Education involves the adult and the young within the society to develop their competencies to enable them solve and manage the socio-economic and physical forces arising in their midst. Ideally, Ezegebe cited in Abubakar (2013), posited that Social Studies not only concerns itself with either the study of man per se, rather with the study of man within the context of his environments, his social, physical, political, economic, cultural and technological environments. Social Studies Education, when taught well with the right materials would equip the learners with practical knowledge, values and skills needed to make meaningful contributions to the development of the society. To this end, Mezieobi (2008), viewed Social Studies as a reformatory school instruction designed to equip learners with desirable attitudes, values, skills and knowledge for cohesive social existence in the Nigerian society.

Development of Social Studies in Nigeria

The introduction of Social Studies as a school subject in Nigerian schools was met with numerous agitations by some subject specialists, most especially, history and geography teachers. This they did with the fear that the introduction of Social Studies would relegate their subjects to the background owing to the fact that the subject was given a national outlook.

Nevertheless, the development of Social Studies in Nigeria however came earlier than those of other countries in Africa. This was because as early as 1958, the Ohio State University in United States of America had sponsored some Nigerians for training programmes in Social Studies. The arrival of the recipients of such training programmes greatly influenced their thoughts about Social Studies. For instance, they perceived the social ills that accompanied Nigeria's transition from colonial era to independence. They discovered the high rate of acculturation among Nigerians and the rate at which the nation's cultural traditions were breaking down. They therefore, felt that the only way to salvage

the country was to train the young ones in a manner that would provide them with opportunities to catch up with the new problem of change (Lawal, 2003).

Furthermore, the period between 1960 and 1981 was a landmark in the educational revolution in Nigeria. It was an era of critical reappraisal of the entire educational system and its curricula. The criticisms that challenged the irrelevance of all the school curricula, including Colonial Social Studies, led to the first muting of the introduction of Social Studies as a discrete subject and its acceptance by the 1969 National Curriculum Conference of 8-12 September (Mezieobi et al, 2008).

Notwithstanding, irrespective of the fact that Social Studies was introduced in some schools in the Western Region of Nigeria in 1963, beginning with the Aiyetoro experiment, it was not until September 13, 1982 that formal Social Studies, as a discrete subject was introduced in Nigerian schools on a national scale. Since then, Social Studies has enjoyed a place of pride, as a core curriculum, in the primary and junior secondary schools (Mezieobi et al, 2008).

The rationale behind the introduction of Social Studies as a core subject in the Nigerian school curriculum was mainly born out of the ugly experience of the civil war together with its attended problems that accompanied such war. In a bid to heal the wounds of this ugly occurrence, Social Studies was seen as a subject furnished with the right ingredients that would help in giving the new breed of young Nigerians the ability to believing in national consciousness and integration. It was also seen as a discrete subject that exposes the learners to Nigerian varied rich history and cultural heritage which could help in revamping the deteriorated national image and to achieve national development.

The Nature and Concept of National Development

Umuru (2002), views national development as development associated with modernization, material advancement, industrialization, scientific and technological progress, the emergence of nuclear energy, electronic and biological revolution, new knowledge about man and the universe. According to him, it also means urbanization, socio-cultural transformation, mass literacy, vertical and horizontal mobility, employment opportunities and the emergence of specialized and independent occupational roles.

Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2003) described national development as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. A nation in this context comprises of a significant number of people sharing common history, culture, norms and tradition, a common language as well as a common boundary. Nigeria as a nation shares some of the common features of a nation such as a binding constitution and policies. Accordingly, Elugbe cited in Adekoya and Ajilore (2012), refers national development among other things to the growth of the nation in terms of unity, education, economic well-being mass participation in government. National development is people oriented and its success is evaluated in terms of the impact it has in improving the lot of the masses (Adekoya and Ajilore, 2012).

On his own part, Ogai cited in Ebeh (2015) sees national development as a gradual manifestation of positive changes in the economic, industrial, political, social, cultural and administrative life of a country. Ideally, when we talk about national development, we are

concerned about quality improvement in the various sectors of our national life such as political, ethical, socio-psychological, economic spheres of national existence, which combined, to define and assure quality and productive existence for the citizens of a country (Ebeh, 2015). In his own submission, King as quoted by Lukpata (2013), observed that a developed nation has skilled citizenry which exercises its capacity to create a highly industrial society and manipulate its environment to obtain a high quality of life for the generality of the population.

In a nutshell, national development is simply viewed as the ability of any nation to improve the social welfare of its citizens by providing basic amenities such as good roads, quality education, medical care, portable water etc. The crucial aspect of national development is the concerned country's ability to utilize the potentials and talents of each individual member of the country towards contributing his little quota for the good of the society and the nation in general. This is what is termed national development or simply put, people-oriented development. Interestingly, national development requires all and sundry to join their arsenal together in order to harness the forces of nature and human potentials for their own social, political, cultural and economic benefit.

Characteristics of Social Studies Education

Social Studies Education has some distinctive characteristics that differentiates it from other Social Sciences and Humanity's course of study as adumbrated by Mezieobi et al, (2008:5-7).

- (i) Social Studies unlike other fields of study sees knowledge and man's social world as an integral whole. In this way, one gets to exactly know how people live in the real world.
- (ii) Social Studies therefore, adopts the integrated approach to knowledge by fusing or blending relevant content, concepts, methods and generalizations drawn from other related disciplines or content area of Social Studies in order to make the learner see the world as a whole, and in addition, "develop an integrated view of reality, (and) free (himself) from the narrow confines of traditional social science discipline".
- (iii) Social Studies in all parts of the world is largely society-relative or society-specific. The Nigeria-centric characteristics of Social Studies is to emphasize the social relevance of Social Studies in which case it addresses the social needs, social realities and social aspirations of Nigerians.
- (iv) Social Studies is socially or society sensitive which implies that Social Studies is a dynamic field of study. In a rapidly changing jet or technological world, Social Studies must keep pace with global changes particularly those affecting Nigeria, and must of necessity reflect the changes, as they occur in the school Social Studies syllabus or curriculum.
- (v) The goal-objects of Social Studies, simply put, are to produce responsible and participative citizens with analytic and reflective skills and attitudes to make their environments yield all that make for good and successful living.

The aforementioned distinctive characteristics of Social Studies is what makes it a unique subject that functions to produce responsible, active and productive citizens with desirable knowledge, skills and values needed to achieve national development.

Objectives of Social Studies

The teaching of Social Studies at whatever level of the Nigerian educational system be it primary, secondary and or higher institutions of learning, has some underlined objectives with which Social Studies is expected to achieve. The general objectives of Social Studies as highlighted by Fan (2003) are categorized as follows: -

1. **Humanistic education** - that is, helping the child to comprehend his life.
2. **Citizenship education** - that is, preparing the child for social responsibility.
3. **Intellectual education** - that is, introducing the child to the modes of thinking and inquiry of the social sciences.
4. **Value education** - that is, inculcating in the individual some societal expected behaviours and group activities, attitudes, values and feelings.

Other objectives found worthy of mention are as well enumerated below;

Accordingly, Social Studies Education helps the child to learn how to live and work together with other members of the society in a friendly and co-operative manner (Robert, 2014).

Furthermore, Social Studies helps to develop in the learner the right attitudes, skills, values and knowledge required for active social life and political participation. With these, the individual is loaded with the desired capacity to make meaningful contribution geared towards developing his/her immediate environment as well as the society at large.

Factors Militating Against National Development in Nigeria

In spite of numerous development plans and strategies put in place in an attempt to achieving a meaningful national development by successive government in Nigeria, a little has been achieved despite investing huge sums of resources into such plans. Based on this, Nigeria national development be it in social, cultural, economic, political, administrative or technological, has been plagued by the following problems as outlined below:

1. **Tribalism/Ethnicity:** The terms connote a strong feeling of identity and loyalty to one's tribe. This is the greatest pitfall to Nigeria's march to national development and integration. Tribalism in Nigeria has been given the status of a national culture and has even crept into the Nigeria constitution which now control how we react, talk or think and also determines what we support or oppose. The damaging effects of tribalism and/ or ethnicity is that it causes mediocrity, suppresses merit and promotes corruption; it stands in the way of national integration and often creates an avenue for communal violence/crisis.

2. **National Insecurity:** The second serious factor militating against Nigeria' national development is the issue of national insecurity which in the recent time, has taken a center stage in our national discourse. Many Nigerians nowadays in some parts of the country are

daily living in fear of losing their lives due to the frequent destructions of lives and properties being orchestrated by members of Boko Haram and the current rampaging of Fulani Herdsmen that has claimed thousands of lives and properties worth billions of naira destroyed. The negative effect of this that government has channeled huge amount of resources that would have been used in developing the nation into catering for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) scattered in various parts of the country.

3. **Poor Budget Implementation:** A budget is a policy document that lists in details all the expected revenues as well as intended expenditures for a period of time usually a year while budget implementation is the actual execution, performance and functioning of a specific revenue and expenditure as estimated in the budget document. It is of truth that the implementation of Nigeria's budget is very poor due to the issues of late budget preparation, approval, extreme uncertainty regarding availability of revenue, significant discrepancy between actual and reported expenditure, lack of experts in the budget preparation and implementation process, lack of transparency and accountability and most importantly, lack of monitoring of the budget implementation. All these as adumbrated above jeopardize the country's effort to achieve national development.

4. **Corruption:** Corruption in a nutshell is the act of impairing integrity, virtue, or moral principle. The desire of the majority of Nigerians for a rapid national development in all spheres of human endeavor has been hampered by corruption. Corruption has become endemic in Nigeria in such a manner that it has entered the entire fabric of the Nigerian society. Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) as cited by Bello and Ahmad (2017), pointed out that corruption promotes economic decay, social and political instability, perverts the ability of a state to foster rule of law and eventually corrodes trust and undermines legitimacy. In effect, corruption promotes ethnic imbalance and leads to abandonment of developmental projects that could have speed up national development in all front.

In view of the above, something drastic must be done if the country (Nigeria) stands any chance of achieving a rapid national development which would transform into national integration and cohesion.

The Contributions of Social Studies Education to National Development in Nigeria

Social Studies education helps in preparing the young ones for effective living in the society. It does this by inculcating into the learner the desired attributes needed to function as a good and patriotic citizen. Atang (2014) noted that Social Studies education prepares our youth to live and work together with other members of the society in a friendly and cooperative manner. He further opined that it is through Social Studies education that the child is taught about the dignity and respect of the rights of other citizens. According to National Teachers Institute (N.T.I, 2000), the contributions of Social Studies to Nigeria's national development include the following:

1. **Inculcation of National Consciousness and National Unity:** It is a pity that most Nigerians show more consciousness for their ethnic groups religious denominations and even clubs and societies than the nation. It is important to emphasize the need for us to be proud of our country Nigeria, because we do not have any other one.
2. **Promotion of Democratic Living:** Nigeria is trying to be one of the democratic countries in the world, though many Nigerians are yet to imbibe the desired political culture needed for the survival of democracy. Through Social Studies, the child will become exposed to some of the political norms and values of the society.
3. **Inculcation of Desirable Values and Social Attitudes:** Social Studies like Citizenship Education has been seen as a means for the inculcation of desirable values and social attitudes in the child and as a means of social reform.
4. **Increasing Awareness:** It is necessary for the child to be exposed gradually to his rights and civic duties as a citizen. The creation of this awareness is one of the objectives of Social Studies in Nigerian Primary schools.

Other contributions of Social Studies towards national development are as follows:

- i. **Knowledge of Important Development in Human Societies:** The knowledge of past events through effective teaching and learning of Social Studies enable the citizens to develop the understanding of how to avoid such happenings in the present and able to project to the future; to build a trouble free society which will metamorphose into national development.
- ii. **Promotion of National Unity:** National unity and or social integration is another means through which Social Studies contribute to national development. When other cultures are visible to the child, it ushers in cultural accommodation, high level of tolerance, reduction in religious bigotry and conflicts of various degrees.
- iii. **Ethical Education and Development:** Ethical education and development are parts of Social Studies education. No nation reaches great heights in national development without producing a crop of ethically responsible citizens, who place national pride and dignity over self-aggrandizement. A good ethical education is a must in order to achieve stable society, especially where societal norms, ethical code of conduct are recognized.

Sequel to the aforementioned contributions of Social Studies geared towards national development, it is pertinent to note that if Social Studies Education is given its pride of place in the Nigerian education environment, it would contribute immensely in helping the nation achieve national development in all fronts thereby enhancing national integration.

Summary

This paper has so far examined how Social Studies Education could be used as a tool for national development in Nigeria. As noted earlier, the young Nigerians are the best instruments for national development but this is only achievable when, they are well educated and has a good understanding of the functions of Social Studies. The skills,

values, attitudes and knowledge these young ones acquire through the learning of Social Studies would be channeled into national development. Social Studies Education is the only discrete subject garnished with the right ingredients required for national development. This is simply so because it trains the young child into becoming a useful adult who can contribute his quota to the development of the society.

Suggestions

- i. Nigerian government should give more priority to the development and implementation of Social Studies curriculum.
- ii. Social Studies should be taught by only qualified teacher who has the prerequisite for teaching the subject.
- iii. All the Nigerian youths should as a matter of urgent importance endeavor to put into practice what they have learnt through Social Studies.

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