

SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

The purpose of education in most countries of the world is the development of individuals who would participate effectively in national development, processes. Social studies was introduced into the Nigerian school system decades ago with the goal of breaking down regional and ethnic, loyalties, and fostering national unity and development. This paper examines the National Policy on Education as it relates to social studies, the problems of National development and the role of social studies education in Nigeria development. It suggests practical steps(field-trip to the prison, court, police station, etc) to be taken so that through social studies education, the desired kind of citizens are produced that would work towards their highest good and the development of the Nigerian nation.

Introduction

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) endorsed education as an instrument par excellence for promoting national development. Indeed the philosophy of Nigerian education is based on the

- ❖ development of the individual into a sound and active citizen;
- ❖ full integration of the individual into the community and;
- ❖ provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.

The vision behind these goals is to produce pupils who are worthy and competent and are willing to work for the promotion of a progressive, united and self-reliant nation. This is the background in which social studies operates, expected to make an impact on the lives of pupils by reflecting changing societal needs, problems and aspirations.

Kissock (1981:3) sees social studies as "a programme of study which instills in students the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions it considers important concerning the relationships human beings have with each other, their world and themselves." From this definition, it can be deduced that social studies is seen as a vehicle for passing on the knowledge developed by a society including the scholarly disciplines with the sole purpose of helping the young people understand and make use of it. Ololobou (2004), defined Social Studies as:

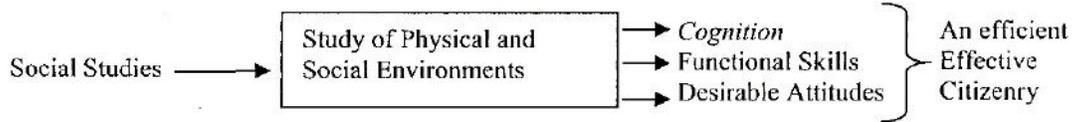
an organized, integrated study of man, his environment, both physical and social, emphasizing on cognition, functional skills and desirable attitudes and actions for the purpose of producing an effective citizenry.(p. 251 and 252).

According to this definition, Social Studies consciously seek to promote:

- Cognition: That is, knowledge, comprehension or understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation as relevant to physical and socio-cultural environmental constituents which include earth materials, relief features, atmospheric processes, water bodies, the vegetal cover, the lower animals; and mans' material and non- material cultures, respectively.
- Functional skills: The acquisition of which make the client more productive and effective in managing the self and relating with the physical, social economic and political environments. We may recognize communication, intellectual, manipulative, study and

- group - work skills, among others.
- Desirable Attitudes and Actions: Such Attitudes and Actions are Supportive of the development process. They include patriotism, honesty, probity, truthfulness, production, punctuality, peaceful co-existence, creativity, functional inter dependence, wise use of scarce resources, etc.

Social Studies thus seeks to make the individual or client a well - rounded, efficient and effective citizen.



According to Rodney (1990), "development implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being." Ikwumelu (1989), stated, the "development can be viewed as a multidimensional process involving the reduction or eradication of inequality, absolute poverty, unemployment and slavery or apartheid, as well as institutional changes and economic growth." One of the major approaches to development is through education, which has to do with the inculcation of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, with the major aim of transforming the individual, who in turn becomes an instrument of development to himself, family, community, nation and the world.

The focus of social studies therefore is essentially man, the society and the environment and its ultimate goal is to equip individuals with knowledge and understanding for effective relationships and living. The social studies programme is the totality of experience and understanding a child gets having been exposed to a course of studies based on man's problems in his environment. This type of programme enables pupils solves various complex problems, which confront them daily as individuals and as members of social group or the society. It therefore, offers the child a richer preparation for life. This paper examines how social studies education can be used as a tool for national development.

The National Policy on Education as it Relates to Social Studies

The National educational objectives is contained in the National Policy on Education are:

- ❖ the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- ❖ the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- ❖ the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- ❖ the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

In line with the national educational objectives, the aims and objectives of Social Studies in the Nigeria education curriculum are:

- ✓ to educate students to become useful citizens of the country and understand their environment.
- ✓ to make them understand the effects of environment on man and the interaction of man with them.
- ✓ to help them appreciate the achievements and roles of the society.
- ✓ to help them realize the need for interdependence with various groups of the society and the world at large.
- ✓ to inculcate in students the values, ideals, knowledge and skills in order to enable them to function properly and play their roles as members of the society.

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) categorized these objectives into the following:

1. Citizen Education: preparing the student for social responsibilities.
2. Humanistic Education: helping the student to comprehend his life.
3. Intellectual Education: introducing the student to the modes of thinking and enquiry .of Social Sciences.

4. Value Education: inculcating in the student, some societal expected behaviours and group activities, attitudes, values and feelings.

By these objectives, the Nigerian child is expected to become creative, resourceful, responsible, understanding, and patriotic. It is important to note that the essence of Social Studies in Nigerian Schools is not just to prepare the child for the society but also to make him to become useful to himself particularly in his preparation for useful, self—reliant and enjoyable adult — life. It is these goals that make the subject essential in the school curriculum.

Obemeata (1983), stated that, the major attraction of Social Studies is that it deals with human behaviour and the belief that the study can contribute significantly to changing the attitudes of the young and coming generation. He further said that, Social Studies was evolved to address certain societal problems and not to produce experts in an economic profession.

The Challenges of National Development in the 21st Century

Development whether social, economic, political or cultural is impeded in Nigeria by the following factors:

- ❖ Colonial Heritage: The colonizers through their various activities inadvertently sowed the seed of disunity in Nigeria. An example of such activities is the arbitrary creation of the Nigeria State and the division of Nigeria to regions (North, West and East). As a result of this, even several years after independence, Nigerians see themselves as belonging more to ethnic regions than the country.
- ❖ Religious Bigotry: In Nigeria Religious fanatics frequently use the two major religious (Christianity and Islam) in dividing rather than uniting the people. Example of this are the Maitatsine religious uprising in Kano and Yola, (1980 and 1982), the Kafanchan religious riots of 1987, which spread to some parts of Northern Nigeria, the Kaduna religious riots of 1996, the Ilorin religious riots of January 2000 and the Sharia riots of February 2000, in Kaduna that spread to Aba and other parts of the country.
- ❖ Bad Leadership: This is manifested through tribalism, nepotism, corruption and divide and rule" which our leaders use to ensure that they keep themselves perpetually in office. They do this by promoting ethnicity and sectional loyalties instead of nationalism and the values of good citizenship.
- ❖ Ethnicity: Odiogor (1988) in Enaiyeju (2002) has suggested that tribalism, like religion, has always served the interest of the ruling class in keeping the people confused on their legitimate rights. There were signs that Nigeria at the time of independence gave the Nigerian people a togetherness but not only unity; it gave Nigeria confidence but not strength. It is a convenient device to perpetuate the people's ethnicity and religion-at the expense of addressing the real social, political and economic issues.
- ❖ Skewed Development: In Nigeria, development more often than not is one side that is in favour of those in power and the urban areas. This breeds will feel and resentment amongst the marginalized group.
- ❖ Ignorance: The low level of literacy brings about low-level consciousness. This makes Nigerians to be highly suspicious of each other and to be looked upon as a group that is manipulated for inordinate reasons.
- ❖ Language: Language has become another force to reckon with in fields of human endeavour throughout Nigeria. Whenever you cannot speak the language of the people you work or interact with, things become difficult to achieve. Inability of some candidates to speak the local language of the people makes it impossible for them to secure jobs or gains employment in a place outside theirs.

In commercial enterprises, understanding the language of the people you are dealing with makes you half through in all problems of trade transaction. It becomes fairly difficult to get contracts in areas that are alien to the contractor. Thus, instead of merits, language now becomes a factor to consider in works, admissions, etc.

- ❖ Politics: The factor has become very important in Nigeria today. The party to which one belongs

now dictates the activities of people in today Nigeria politics. There have been cases where the peace and stability of the nation had been affected as a result of the nature of political activities of the period.

In 1962, there was the Western crises and the exchange of chairs as weapons in the parliament. Political crisis have in the past led to instability and chaos which eventually led to coup-detat and change of government people of the same blood and religion because of their differences in political issues. Even people of the same party have become divided over some national issues that are crucial. In fact the greater force that can cause disintegration of any nation is the political trends in the nation.

- ❖ **Natural- Resources:** The country is highly diversified in distribution of natural resources while some communities are popular for the production of both mineral and forest products, some have limited mineral products. When it comes to revenue allocation, states where Nigeria get the highest money from the mineral products of the place continue to cry out for more or special consideration. Revenue allocation has become a sensitive issue in Nigeria politics today. Thus people call for fair distribution of Federal projects. Niger- Delta crisis is an example.

The Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS): AIDS, caused by an attack of the Human T-Cell Lymphotropic Virus, and without a definite treatment at present, it leads to death. This being so, AIDS is a threat to the human species and the human race, and by extension, to social studies since it is human beings who are interested and involved in social studies.

Social studies educators must vigorously participate in the growth of knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for controlling and overcoming AIDS.

- ❖ **Poverty:** A poor nation lives in social isolation, insecurity, psychological distress and lack of freedom. Nigeria as a nation remains poor in the midst of abundant natural and human resources, which should not be so.

Stanley (1987), defines poverty as "a state of being poor, despised, looked down upon and most significantly, lacking things that translate into good physical and mental health. Poverty, simply refers to economic and social inequality. It could mean scarcity, want, inferiority or lack. Poverty means denial of choices and basic opportunities, which enable one to live a tolerable life materially., psychologically and culturally. When people live in a healthy, peaceful and loving environment without hunger, democratic virtues can be acquired, and the country can progress and develop.

The Role of Social Studies in Nigerian Development

Social studies help in preparing the learner for living effectively now and in the foreseeable future. It does this by drawing upon the long and varied experiences of the human race for illumination into complex societal problem. Taylor in Enem (2000) noted that social studies prepare our youths to understand the rapid changes and the development that are taking place in our country. The roles of social studies in Nigerian development according to N. T. I. (2000) are as follows;

- **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. These can be done during elections periods e.g. refraining from electoral malpractice, voting for the right leader, and discouraging corrupt malpractice. If the child gets this training from the beginning, he is likely (o grow into adulthood with the desired political orientation, patriotic attitude and national consciousness.
- **Inculcating Sense of Responsibility to Others:** The old adage of being ones brother's keeper had been eroded by the greedy desire for material wealth. We do not seem to regard our responsibilities to others as fundamental. This is not good because we are trying to destroy the unique feature of our cultural life style. There are numerous ways we can feel concerned for our fellowmen. These include showing sympathy, consoling during grief, aiding during need, directing confusion especially in the case of strangers, and protections in the case of threat and so on. These attributes are fast dying among the youths and for this to permeate the youth is dangerous. Hence, the child in the primary

school must begin to learn how to develop this spirit of concern and responsibility to others, and this can be done through Social Studies. The child therefore sees peace and security of others as his concern.

Respect for the Worth and Dignity of Others: Nigeria is not only diverse in its ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic and social composition, but respect for the worth and dignity of others. The nation now is facing crises in which some ethnic or religious groups try to dominate other because of self- assumed superiority. This brings rancor and prejudice, which cause disunity. The Nigerian child should learn from the beginning that all Nigerians are equal in spite social and cultured differences between them. By its objective Social Studies helps to inculcate in the child the spirit of acceptance of the respect for the worth of every Nigerian.

- **Development of Tolerance:** Nigerians have different values and beliefs depending on their cultural background. Yet these differences are to be sunk in the interest of National Unity. Unfortunately, a number of Nigerians have failed to tolerate their fellow citizens with different religious, political and ideological views. A number of public disturbances in some parts of the country have been the result of political and religious intolerance. For a Peaceful and United Nigeria, citizens must be made to understand that each social, political and religious group has a right to exist and co-exist. If we respect and tolerate one another, no one would be hurt.
- **Increasing Awareness:** What should border you is why most Nigerians are interested in breaking the laws of the land than helping to uphold them, which of course is one of their civic responsibilities. Some of these acts are done out of ignorance of the consequence. There is a study which reports that most of those who rigged or allowed themselves to be used to rig during the 1979 and 1983 general elections did so out of ignorance about the consequence their actions would have on the effective leadership of the nation. It is therefore 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 Nigeria Primary Schools.
- **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. Americans are proud to identify themselves as Americans. The British do the same.. If we are proud of a thing, we have the need to do everything possible to protect and preserve it. Hence, every Nigerian needs to develop a sense of attachments, awareness and identity for the country. Primary School Social Studies helps the child to become acquainted with the National Symbols such as the Flag, the Anthem, the Pledge, and the pictures of leaders and so on. Are all Nigerians feel committed to the pride and preservation of the country? They would then have one thing in common, that is national consciousness which they would want to bequeath to their on - coming generations. This common interest and aspiration help to bind together for national unity.
- **Inculcation Of Desirable Values And Social Attitude:** Social Studies as 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. It is in this light that while some people have seen Social Studies as a means of socialization others see it as a means of indoctrination. Which ever applies, what is importance is the inculcation of desirable norms and values of the society from one generation to another. Without doing this, the child will find it difficult to fit into the society. Doing this seems to be a unique role of Social Studies because the subject is largely based on socio - cultural context of the society. Some of the societal values to be inculcated are honesty, fair play, hard work, patriotism, obedience, discipline, loyalty, respect, self-confidence, among others.

Ololobou (1995), believes that Social Studies Education is capable of contributing substantially to the realization of the dreams of Nigeria.

Recommendations

If effective teaching of Social Studies in Nigeria Primary Schools is to be used as a catalyst for national development, the teacher should teach the pupils with emphasis on the following:

1. He should select materials in such away as to inculcate the spirit of patriotism.
2. He should make deliberate effort to challenge the pupils to examine certain positive values and attitudes and the need to adopt them.
3. He should make his pupils think critically about issues and social problems.
4. He should give to the pupils a number of relevant activities so that they can form the needed attitudes, values and skills.
5. The pupils should be made to appreciate (he need to co-operate with fellow citizens for peace and unity of this country).
6. The pupils should be taught the need to appreciate their cultural values and respect for that of other people.
7. They should be made to develop the spirit of tolerance particularly in religious matters.
8. Some resources of social studies such as literacy materials, radio and television programmes, which have hitherto been neglected in the social studies curriculum, will be recognized.
9. Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) should be in the forefront of the campaign-to fight corruption which is greatest enemy of development in Nigeria. This can be in form of national rally on anti-corruption.
10. More textbooks should also be written and published by social studies specialist to sustain the struggle against corruption. Such books should have illustrations and examples that will discourage corruption.

Conclusion

This paper discussed how social studies education could serve as a catalyst for national development. As indicated earlier, the young ones are the best instruments for national development. It can be achieved if they are well trained in all subjects, social studies inclusive, such training would not depart from them and the knowledge, skills, values and attitude acquired would be used for national development. Social studies is the only subject-that can effectively inculcate into the pupils, the desirable values, ideas, beliefs and attitudes which would enable pupils develop the nation. Because it is a subject that trains the 'head' and the 'heart', Obemeata, Ogugua, Agu and Laosebikan (1981) described social studies as a "key to unlock" the tender hearts of the pupils and plant "tools" which would be used for national development in later years.

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