Social Studies was introduced into the Nigerian school system decades ago with the goal of breaking down regional, ethnic, and religious loyalties, and fostering national unity. The British came to Nigeria in 1851 and met a highly divided people. Lord Lugard crafted a country from the numerous nationalities in the North and South of the Niger. That

RE-GENERATING SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION FOR POVERTY ERADICATION, SELF-RELIANCE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Nsidibe S. E. Udoh
Department of Social Studies,
College of Education,
Afaha Nsit.

And

Iboro O. Ukpong
Department of Social Studies,
College of Education,
Afaha Nsit.

Abstract

Education has often been described as a powerful instrument of liberation from disease, ignorance and poverty. On the basis of the above explosion, the paper examines the concepts of education, re-generating, social studies education and social studies curriculum. In addition to the above, the paper also highlights the concept of poverty self reliance, Social Studies Curriculum and Nigerian National Objectives, general objectives of Social Studies Education, Social Studies Education: A mechanism for Self-reliance, Social Studies education for poverty eradication, national development and problems of social studies education. In conclusion, the paper proposes urgent social studies curriculum review by the stakeholders at all levels to reflect pressing problems in Nigeria like unemployment and poverty eradication recommendations were made to include an urgent Social Studies curriculum review by the stakeholders by all levels to reflect pressing problems in Nigeria, establishment of Social Studies workshops at all tertiary institutions were they are not available.
country became a political reality with the attainment of independence in 1960. Within three years, the elite were fighting each other at the regional and national level over their shares of the national cake, a cake they were yet to brake. The wars at the centre were fought using religion and ethnicity as base. These problems were enormous but many saw them as teething problems of nation building. The military class saw it differently and by January 1966, Nigeria tasted its first coup d’etat. Within a decade of independence, Nigeria was embroiled in a civil war. Majority of Nigerian fought on the side of “one nation, one destiny”. The ideals for which hundreds of thousands of Nigerians who lost their lives became the subject of Social Studies, a new field of study introduced immediately after the war (Obebe, 2005).

Conceptual Classifications Education: The word education is derived from the Latin word; educo-are,-avi,-atum, which means; “to bring up” According to the New Websters Dictionary (2000), education means instruction or training by which people (generally young) learn to develop and use their mental, moral and physical powers. Further more, Longman’s Dictionary (1995), defined education as the process by which one’s mind develops through learning at school, college or university; or the knowledge and skill you gain from being taught, or the general area of work or study connected with teaching.

Re-generating: Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2007:1066) defined regenerate to improve a place or system, especially by making it more active or successful-regeneration. In this context, therefore, representing Social Studies Education would mean improving upon the present standard of Social Studies education in order to enhance self-reliance, poverty eradication and National development.

Social Studies Education: Fadeiye (2006) defined Social Studies education as the study of man, as he interacts with his different environment. These environment could be physical, social, political, economic or cultural environment. It is also the study on how man influences his environment with a view to gathering maximum benefits from it. The subjects also deals with how the environment influences man in return. Social Studies has also been described as a way of life, as it touches on all spheres of human endavour. Social Studies also describes how man tries to solve the problems of survival in whatever environment man finds himself. It also studies the society, the relationships between people and the world in which they live.

Social Studies Curriculum: It is the association of curriculum to education that interests all social studies educators. Therefore, social studies curriculum must be evolved on the belief that social studies education should positively influence and modify the learner’s behavior in the direction of acceptable and current socio-political and cultural order. Social studies curriculum must emphasized the “affective domain” in order to engage pupils directly
and actively in the learning process through appropriate and relevant classroom learning activities.

**Concepts of Poverty:** Dewit (2000), defined poverty as a terrible living condition in which one cannot afford the basic things of life such as good feeding, accommodation and clothing. Abraham (2002) also defined poverty as a pathetic life situation in which a person lives from hand to mouth, and as a result either finds it difficult to eat three square meals a day or eats whatever is available to him.

**Concept of National Development:** The ultimate aim of national development is to bring about sustained improvement in the well-being of the individual and bestow benefits to all. Development is all about self-reliance in every aspects of national life. As citizen must be involved in the exploitation of the national and natural resources, if becomes necessary to develop the individuals to be in a position to develop the society in which he lives.

**Concepts of Self-reliance**
Self-reliance is of two folds, one that encourage economic survival and development. The first one is national self-reliance as an entity, which will cut across economic, social and political perspectives while the second aspect concerns the individuals as a self-reliance person. When nation is self-reliance, it means that all her resources including human and materials are fully utilized in such away as to producing a favourable Gross National Product (GNP). When youths and adults are not properly trained vocationally or technically so as to be capable of producing goods and services in accordance with the demand and supply of the society, self-reliance would become elusive and difficult to achieve. This is why no individual or nation can attain self-reliance without productivity.

**Social Studies Curriculum and Nigerian National Objectives**
Nations have set national objectives which act as guide for national policies, plans, decisions and strategies. Nigeria’s set national objectives as articulated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004).

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A United, strong and self-reliant nation;
4. A great and dynamic economy;
5. A land of bright and full opportunities for all.

The educational system is expected to socialize and produce citizens who will help achieve the above stated national objectives. Consequently, the national philosophy on education has the following set aims and objectives as stated in the document (NPE) (2004).

1. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
2. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society
3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around, and
4. Acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

**General Objectives of Social Studies Education**

Social Studies is one of the subjects in the Nigerian schools which helps the educational system work towards achieving set national objectives. The general objectives of Social Studies education are as follows:

1. To help man develop his intellect, skills, abilities and competencies and promote in him the spirit of enquiry, discovery, thinking and curiosity which act as a spur to further investigation.
2. To know what the society expects of its members so that he will be able to judge his actions as well as those of others.
3. To create in man an awareness and appreciation of the benefits and results of scientific and technological discoveries and inventions and make him see how these affect his everyday life.
4. To familiarize man with the norms of his society, and thus socialize him in accordance with such norms. This will enable him improve and perpetuate his society.
5. To help man become a good citizen and develop the necessary values and attitude needed in a democracy.
6. To expose man to the problems of his society and then lead him to develop appropriate functional approaches to the solutions of such problems.
7. To help man develop valuable and socially acceptable concepts ideas and philosophy of life (Ezegbe, 1988).

**Social Studies Education: A Mechanism for Self Reliance**

Self-reliance emphasizes growth and development in the economic, political and social systems. It stresses self-sufficiency in food production, invention of facilities for storage, processing and marketing as well as increase in foreign exchange earnings. Self-reliance also has to do with reduction of the level of poverty, reversal of rural urban migration and general improvement of the quality of life. A nation that is self-reliant normally ensures responsible control over the exploitation of its mineral resources or that it does not resort to importation (Eboh and Ukpong, 1993).

However, Nigerian educational system has gone a long way to reach its present stage. It has passed through various revolutionary changes. Commissions and study panels have been set up to produce functional educational blue prints for the
nation aimed at training self-reliant Social Studies students. The nation also have the Universal Basic Education (UBE) aimed at making every Nigerian child literate. The aim and objectives of Social Studies has always been laudable and generally directed towards the building of a socially, economically and politically virile children for the nation where every child has equal opportunity for the attainment of self-realization.

**Social Studies Education for Poverty Eradication**

Poverty is not new but at each mention, it stirs a lot of misgivings. This is because it has very devastating influence on its victims. Poverty is a condition of being poor. Research holds it that the foundation of most social vices and corrupt practices both in high and low places resulted to this scourge called poverty. At present, Nigeria is rated as one of the poorest countries of the world. It is as a result of this, that the United Nations in the year 2000 in a meeting popularly referred to as Millennium Summit in the United States of America arrived at the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to UN, the 189 members of this organization, by 2015 are expected to have met these goals. The eight (8) goals have the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger as the first goal to be met in the stipulated year. Nigeria, as a member of United Nations keyed into the MDGs and produced a policy document called the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) to further see to the achievement of the millennium development goals. Specifically, (NEEDS) has the following actionable goals:

i. Poverty reduction
ii. Wealth creation
iii. Value re-orientation
iv. Employment generation

The NEEDS as a national policy was intended to meet some of the goals of the MDGs, especially poverty reduction (Anger, 2010).

Poverty according to Anger (2010) may be difficult to define, because many people see it from different perspective. This connotes the fact that what may be termed ‘poor’ by one people may not be seen as ‘poor’ by the other people. To Adejo (2006), poverty can be manifested in poverty of history, poverty of intellect and poverty of ideology. In any case, the deprived are usually the poor.

Teaching/learning in the integrated concept approach emphasizes activity-oriented learning. This approach caters for the needs and interests of both weak and bright students since there is opportunity for all to participate. The learner-centred approach to learning engages learner’s attention in the class which makes for more effective learning. In the process, the learners develop mastery of the activity and confidence because they learn by doing.

In addition, the opportunity of child-centred learning in Social Studies allows for free expression, engenders creativity, and creates a conducive learning environment which promotes independent
Social Studies education aims at equipping the learner with knowledge of his immediate environment and the wider world. It seeks to equip the learner with concepts, ideas and philosophies that influence policies and decision making. The learner’s intellect is taught to understand information from books and other media and apply such knowledge to problem solving. Social Studies objectives when achieved, engender co-operation and inter-dependence which are necessary for the existence of any society (Nzeribe, 2002). From the above, it does seem that Social Studies if properly taught would help in improving upon the present standard of education.

Problems of Social Studies Education

Some citizens have antagonistic perception of what social studies is out to accomplish. This is so because the positive value and skills of social studies education are opposed to the existing negative social, economic and political environment. Citizens still insist on living with their selfish, greedy discriminatory, exploitative, corrupt personal and social values. There is no doubt that global values and traditions are Western values and traditions. These Western values are counter to Nigerian traditional values and traditions that should be cherished and protected.

Conclusion

What has been attempted in this paper is to establish that Social Studies education is a basic course to regenerating education for poverty eradication, self-reliance and national development and that there is need for government to formulate and implement policies that will engender Social and cultural re-orientation, that will promote self-reliance and citizens empowerment in the society. Thus, when citizens are capable of standing on their own, there will be hope for poverty eradication in the nearest future.

Recommendations

1. There should be an urgent Social Studies Curriculum review by the stakeholders at all levels to reflect pressing problems in Nigeria.
2. Government should establish social studies workshops at all tertiary institutions where they are not available.
3. Refresher courses should be given to Teachers of Social Studies at all levels.

References


