

SOCIAL STUDIES AND THE TRANSFORMATION AGENDA IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of Social Studies education on the transformation agenda of the present administration as a response to the challenge of lack of continuity, consistency and commitment to public policies that has denied the citizens the benefits of economic growth and national development. The effect manifests as poverty, unemployment and unequal opportunities in Nigeria. These problems were blame on attitude of public office holders and lack of appropriate value orientation prevalent in the Nigerian State. Social Studies were seen as a relevant discipline that can be used to pursue the goal of the transformation agenda, because the contents are capable of creating awareness of the evolving Nigerian environment. Its teaching encourages patriotism and national integration- a foundation on which the transformation agenda can thrive. The paper recommends that government should implement programmes that will win the confidence of the public which will make the transformation agenda succeed.

Keywords: Social Studies, Transformation, Agenda

Education remains the solid tool for any transformation agenda in both developed and developing countries or nations. Nigeria as a developing economy cannot trivialize the role of education in the effort towards the transformation initiative of the present administration. This is because education provides the basis for any meaningful transformation that can take place in a society. Men and not machines are the building blocks for national economic development; hence, the first step towards transformation should be to provide the environment for the transformation of the men and women that will engineer national transformation. Such is made possible through education. It should be understood that economic transformation is the outcome public policy implementation with the view to meeting the needs of the populace and the least in the process of achieving significant transformation. The first factor in this process is affective-domain transformation which requires a type of education.

Osakwe (2009) noted that Social Studies is a pivot for national integration and economic development. This view correlates with the various concepts attributed to Social Studies education. For instance, Akinlaye (2003) observed that Social Studies education deals with the entirety of man in his environment. Also, Jimoh (2010) believed that Social Studies education provides the understanding of social events that man participates in daily in society. He pointed to economic activities, family life, politics etc as some of such events that man involve himself in. On their part, Osakwe and Itedjere (2005) saw how Social Studies education relates with moral rectitude of man in society pointing further that the knowledge of Social Studies education leads to humane attitude, respect for elders, participation in civic responsibility such as election, paying of tax etc, good citizen and contributing meaningfully to ones community and nation.

These conceptual clarifications show that the objective of Social Studies education corresponds to the national goal of education in Nigeria. The National Policy on Education (2004) [4th edition] underscores some of these objectives which an egalitarian society as an essential characteristic. The New Method English Dictionary (2003) states that egalitarian society means a society where citizens are treated as equals and have equal opportunities. The web Dictionary (2012) noted that egalitarian society implies a trend of thought that favours equality of some sort in society. According to Lepowsky (1993), egalitarian means favouring social equality. This meaning tends towards a society that allows people to participate in the process of political change and transformation. By implication, an egalitarian society is a participatory society by all well meaning but enlightened and educated individuals. That is, a society that allows its citizens to participate more or less in political and economic culture. Also, it is a society that recognizes few differences in wealth, power, prestige or status.

Thus, the underlying feature of an egalitarian society is that its people are allowed to participate in governance and political agenda. Hence, the transformation agenda of the present regime ought to be embraced by all particularly by the elite class who will be able to make meaningful contribution towards its success. The framework of the federal government transformation agenda was informed by the ineptitude of the Nigerian state as a failed economy demanding urgent resuscitation.

Usigbe (2011) reported the breakdown of President Goodluck Jonathan's Transformation agenda with which he hopes to turn the country around by the end of his tenure in 2015. The reported is based on a summary of the federal government's key priority policies, programmes and projects coordinated by the National Planning Commission (NPC). Usigbe revealed that the agenda was necessitated by the need to correct the flaws in the country's drive for development where there is absence of long-

term perspective and lack of continuity, consistency and commitment 3Cs to agreed policies. He quoted the president as stating that, “This government believes that the culminating effect of these has been growth and development of the Nigerian economy without a concomitant improvement in the overall welfare of Nigerian citizens”.

To the Jonathan’s administration, the disregard for this 3Cs has resulted in rising unemployment, inequality and poverty and it is therefore prepare to come with a holistic transformation of the Nigerian state with a strategy that gives cognizance to these 3Cs in the duration of the administration. These 3Cs are human factors that are fundamental to a realistic transformation agenda. They go beyond the cognitive and psychomotor domain of the man’s knowledge. They could find meaning only at the affective domain of knowledge of the man behind the drive for the transformation agenda. It is against this background that this paper addresses the impact of Social Studies education on the transformation agenda in Nigeria.

The Impact of Social Studies Education on the Nigerian Society

The transformation agenda is a response to the challenges facing the Nigerian economy due to lack of continuity, consistency and commitment. Humans are the agents of policy implementation that brings about change and transformation. Social Studies education is concerned with how affectionate the man is when it comes to the general good of society. The man’s heart plays a significant role in matters that deals with continuity, consistency and commitment to policies. Drawing from Bloom’s Taxonomy of learning domains, affective implies growth in feeling- the ability to have something felt, that is, something that should be of concern to an individual. Training in many other disciplines may have their impact on the individual but not like Social Studies education that has the objective of preparing man to be affectionate in his interaction, communication, transaction and social relationships.

Still, continuity, consistency and commitment are attitudinal characteristics of a man to perform given responsibilities. Where these are not demonstrated, performance could be interrupted, pointing out the problems of attitude. This in turn implies that, persons with the problem of attitude are not affectionate. That is, they don’t have the motivation and interest to act. Against this backdrop, Social Studies education contents emphasize training on the development of the learners affective domain. As one of its objectives, Social Studies education is focused on the attitude the child would need to express at the larger society. Thus, Social Studies education equips the learner with the knowledge of right attitudes such as honesty, transparency, truthfulness, hardworking, commitment to duty, dignity of labour, continuity of purposes and consistency of action. These moral attitudes are essential ingredients to national integration, economic growth and social justice. These are attitudes that negate fraudulence, corruption and injustice, but promote societal good and transformation.

Again, Social Studies education is concerned about human behavior. Its learning contents are directed towards change in the behavioural pattern of the individual. It is only a changed person that can effect any realistic and positive change because “like begets like”. The lack of continuity, consistency and commitment to national policies by political office holders is an attribute of the human behavioural problem. According to the Web Definition (2012), behavioural problem is that behaviour that is annoying or destructive. This can be avoided when at the early stage of the individual’s life, he is exposed to good behaviour taught in Social Studies such as humility, contentment, life of sacrifice, and fear of God, etc.

The Nigerian Value System and Social Studies

The influence of value orientation of the majority in the Nigerian society is determine on the way to realizing the transformation agenda of the federal government of Nigeria. A nation that consumes more than what she produces seems to have thrown value overboard. From an ethical perspective, value orientation deals with the principles of right and wrong that are accepted by an individual or a social group. Most societal values are social in content. This implies that social values are concerned with larger concept which includes social capital as well as the subjective aspect of the citizen’s well being such as their ability to participate in making decisions that affect them. Hence, in the opinion of Ola (2006), any nation that would indeed be great, must be established upon enduring national values that binds every individual in the corporate entity.

Ola’s observation points to the facts that commitment to duty seems to be a way out for Nigeria from her present abject situation where nothing seems to be working because the government cannot be trusted and individuals outside government are doing nothing to make things happen. He argued that national integration as an element that would make any nation great must be revisited because it influences national character and image. He reflected corruption of political holders as negating the value of honesty and trust expected from highly placed government personnel’s. He added that skills and interest are not enough to make a man great and indeed any nation. What determines how successful one would turn out in life is largely the values he subscribes and cherish

This view corresponds with the experiences in Thomas Edison who was perhaps not the brightest scientist in his days but he stood out and invented the light bulb. After several failed attempts, Thomas reported that he became the more persistent where his colleagues may have relaxed. What saw him through were not his skills nor his interests but persistence. His value made him succeed. According to Ola (2006), this is a reflection of the Nigerian experience, a nation so much talented and skilled yet, unfortunately unsuccessful because she lacked value system. By implication, value

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system is the sustaining force upon which any reform agenda will stand. This is because, no matter the amount of reforms undertaken by the federal, state and local governments of Nigeria, it is not probable that Nigeria will be transformed until value re-orientation is vigorously pursued. Observation shows that Nigeria value system as it stands today is faulty. It lacks patriotism and as such, the people are anti government, government policies alienates the people because of greed and self-centeredness of few political leaders. Against this backdrop, there can be no meaningful progress until the Nigerian value system is put right.

Social Studies teaches value system as one of its concepts which entails the teaching of the right attitude and value towards the development of learners. It provides the learner the knowledge of what should constitute an individual and national value orientation. It shows the differences between a good name and riches. For instance, it draws comparison between the sacredness of the human life and ritual killing for the sake of making plenty of money; facing the rigours involved in passing examination by being studious and involving in the shame of examination malpractices, [when caught in the act] working with one's hands for daily up-keep and stealing etc. On the part of nation's value, Social Studies emphasizes the need for government to be proactive by initiating programmes that are people-centered through the provision of social amenities, infrastructures, employment for teeming graduates and school leavers, industries, security of life and property and creating enabling environment for private participation in economic development. Where these values exist, the resultant effects will be patriotism on the part of the citizens to the nation.

Social Studies, Patriotism and National Transformation

One of the objectives of Social Studies teaching in schools is to create awareness of ones evolving environment including the need to be patriotic for ones nation. A government that receives the support of citizens for his initiatives and programmes is bound to succeed. It thus implies that national transformation is based on the doctrine of patriotism.

Hawkins (1995) stated that patriotic means loyally supporting one's country. Akpochafo (2011) stated that Nigeria is a mother without children. This statement is predicated on the fact that Nigerian citizens are not patriotic. This confirms the present experience in Nigeria where many are not interested in loyally supporting the country by contributing meaningfully to its transformation. Rather, most people are working against the co-existence of and the Nigerian nationhood.

The government transformation agenda no matter how laudable it is on paper and on the television screens will remain a pipe dream until the man outside the government makes it happens. Therefore, the government must of necessity promote

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patriotism using Social Studies as a pivot. This is because Social Studies is that discipline that concentrates efforts on training the child to have love for and contribute meaningfully to one's country. It teaches the child that national service should be held above all else. Thus, Social Studies can be used as a mobilization tool to raise the level of awareness for national patriotism.

The Love Nigeria Group (2012) stated that patriotism and Nigerian nationalism has been on the decline for a long time. The group revealed that Nigerian tend to love anything from anywhere but Nigeria. From the outrageous to the necessary and the mundane. There is also the increasing dangerous trend of concentrating in tribe, region, state, religion without much thought for Nigeria as a nation. Most Nigerian people tend to ignore the wake-up call to serve as enshrined in the National Anthem, and seem to lack that unity, faith, loyalty and honesty that the National Pledge requires.

This view supposes that patriotism is an abstract phenomenon in the Nigeria society so long as there exists a wide spread of segregation among the constituent federating units, religious violence and regional interest to the total neglect of one Nigeria. Social Studies in this regards, ensures that national integration is emphasized as a process towards promoting patriotism in Nigeria. Teachings in Social Studies stress the need and awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. This is based on the fact that though Nigerian society belongs to different ethnic backgrounds, religions, regions and speak different languages, recognize the fact that, all are one. This kind of integration is very important in the transformation agenda of the federal government in the process of building a strong and prosperous nation.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the role of Social Studies education in the transformation agenda of the present administration. The initiative by Mr. President Goodluck Jonathan was perceived as a response towards the lack of continuity, consistency and commitment to government policies by past administration.

The paper draws attention to the fact that lack of continuity, consistency and commitment to public policies, these 3Cs are due to lack of attitude of public office holders and the political class. This is as a result of a faulty value system that has been experienced for a long time in Nigeria which has become the proverbial mother without children, since there is no patriotism among most Nigerian citizens.

Since national transformation is a concept in nation building and education is a tool for achieving national goal, Social Studies education is considered adequate as a pivot because its contents sufficiently educate the individual on the right attitude and value needed for the continuum of society. In addition, it teaches the learner how to

promote patriotism through national integration which is needed as a foundation on which the transformation agenda will be built.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion reached in this study, the following recommendations are hereby made.

1. Social Studies education should be adopted as machinery for promoting the national transformation agenda of the federal government, because its content tends towards citizenship education and patriotism.
2. Government should emphasize the Nigeria National Anthem as propaganda. By this way, it can promote integration.
3. Government should initiate and implement programmes and policies that will touch on the lives of people such as employment of the youths, provision of basic social amenities. In this way, government will be able to win the confidence of the citizens and thereby, make them patriotic. This is very significant for the achievement of the transformation agenda of the present administration before 2015.

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