



SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION: A LINCHPIN FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract:

The issue of national development continues to remain a challenge that preoccupy most of the third world countries that aspire for greatness. Therefore, this paper focused on placed place of social studies education in sustainable national development in Nigeria. in trying to this the paper explain some concept and x-ray the aims and objectives of social studies. It went on to discuss several ways through which social studies can be used to promote national development in the Nigeria school system and finally made some valuable recommendations.

Keywords: social studies, national development and sustainable, development

1. Introduction

The introduction of social studies into the Nigerian school curriculum for about fifty years ago was seen as a welcome development. Jekayinfa (2014) substantiated the foregoing claim when he noted that *“Social Studies had been introduced into the educational system in Nigeria about 50 years ago. Ever since then, the subject had been able to spread its tentacles to all levels of educations in Nigeria”*.

Irrespective of the fact that social studies curriculum has become a common parlance in contemporary Nigeria in each of the level of educational system, with specific reference to the lower, middle and upper Basic Education levels, colleges of education and conventional universities, there is no disagreement among the social studies professional practitioners to the effect that concept: Social Studies is alien to us and, therefore, *“was really borrowed”* (Mezieobi, Fubara & Mezieobi 2015, p. 12). In support of

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the above fact, Mezieobi and Birabil (2017) aptly substantiated the foregoing claim when they noted quite emphatically that “*Social Studies is as old as Nigeria itself*”.

National development to this end could be weakly articulated and achieved in polity without the sound implementation of social studies curriculum in Nigeria. This is because, social studies as a subject emerged to produce good citizenry as well as to reflect more clearly national needs and aspirations.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2015, p. 132) emphasized the need for conceptual clarifications when they put it that “*in order to provide a common frame of understanding between the communicator and his audience, the clarification of concepts become more than ever before very crucial*”. This is in order to make for easy understanding of the paper by the communicatee taking the communicator’s stand on the strength of the above three (3) concepts are to be discussed in some details. They include social studies, national development and sustainable development.

2.1 The Concept: Social Studies

Unlike any other social sciences, social studies have no single universally acceptable definition. Its definitions are as many as authorities in the field differs depending on their background and orientations. For instance, (Mezieobi 1992) conceptualized social studies as “*a formalized, correlated or integrated study of man and his environment, which imbues the learner with the cognition, skills values, attitudes, abilities and competencies that will enable him become an informed, rational, analytical, participative and functional citizen in his environment and beyond*”. In a related development, Adaralegbe (1975), define social studies as the study of how man influences and is in turn influenced by his various environments. Mezieobi (2014) sees social studies to be learning activities that are best suited to living in communities, societies and relating in organizations for the promotion of civic competencies.

2.2 The Concept: National Development

Ota (2013:140) defines national development as “*the ability of a given nation to introduce changes that will accelerate economic growth and reduce inequality and poverty among its citizens*”. National development in Nigeria aims at the attainment and generally accepted standards and norms in respect of the nation’s economic system, political organization, ethnic and family relationship. National development refers to the process of systematic transformation of the overall social, economic, political, scientific and technological life of a nation via reflective thinking, sound decision making, effective planning, active participation of the citizens and their attitudinal will to give such reconstruction to change (Mezieobi, 2010).

2.3 The Concept: Sustainable Development

Mezieobi, Mezieobi and Nwosu (2014) defines sustainable as a process of holding tenaciously (perhaps already in existence or newly emerging), maintaining it and

continuously improving on it ordinarily for the better. This is the type of development that has the capacity to meet the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own need. Sustainable development could also be referred to as the organizing principle for meeting human development goals as well as providing resources for man's use within a given environment.

2.4 Aims and Objectives of Social Studies in Nigeria

The philosophy of Nigerian education is based on the integration of individual into a sound and effective citizen and an equal education opportunity for all the citizens of the country. To this end, the national educational aims and objectives from which social studies derived its own objectives as stated in the National Policy on Education (1981) includes:

- 1) the inculcation of right type of values and attitude for the survival of the individual and Nigerian society;
- 2) the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- 3) the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- 4) the acquisition of appropriate skills, ability and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society (FRN, 1981:8).

From the above aims and objectives, social studies arrived on the Nigerian school curriculum with the sole aim of achieving the following objectives:

- 1) to create an awareness and an understanding of our social and physical environment in order to conserve it for national development;
- 2) to develop a capacity to learn and acquire certain basic skill of literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking essential to the forming of sound judgment concerning social, economic and political issues
- 3) to teach the child to acquire a relevant body of knowledge and information necessary for personal development and contribution to the betterment of mankind;
- 4) to develop appreciation for the diverse nature and interdependence of Nigerian communities, wider national, and international communities, and
- 5) to develop in students, positive attitudes towards the spirit of friendliness and cooperation necessary for a healthy nation, and to inculcate appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness and justice;
- 6) to create an awareness and understanding of our evolving social and physical environment as a whole in its natural and man-made setting.
- 7) to develop the ability to think reflectively and come up with a comprehensive and independent conclusion
- 8) to ensure the development of a sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and interdependence of members of the society
- 9) to help man identify and utilize his available resources within the immediate environments.
- 10) to promote an effective and active citizen;

11) to develop a systematic appreciation of the diversity and interdependence of all members of the society.

A critical look at the above objectives, shows that social studies was not only introduced as a field of study but an instrument capable of bringing about a sustainable national development to a country like Nigeria perhaps, it was on this note that Abdiel (2015) observed that through social education, man is equipped with useful knowledge, practical skills, positive values and attitudes to be sufficiently informed to tackle societal problems and issues.

2.5 Social Studies Education and Sustainable National Development

Social studies as a discipline incorporate all aspect of reforms, revitalization and maintenance of educational values, knowledge and skills expected of people concerned about the overall development of the society. This is in line with what is stated in the National Policy on Education (2004:4) that *“the Federal Government of Nigeria adopted education as an instrument “par excellent” for effecting national development”*.

Mezieobi, Fubara and Meziobi (2015) gave an outline of seven goals of social studies which can be linked to the promotion and sustenance of national development to:

- 1) didactic or knowledge and information goals;
- 2) reflective thinking goal;
- 3) affective goal;
- 4) citizen transmission goal;
- 5) pupil’s self enhancement goal and;
- 6) skills’ goal.

The above goals can be a working tool and stand the test of time if social studies teachers can go extra miles and preach the gospel of social studies by:

- promoting socio-civic competences in the learner;
- developing in the learner, positive attitude and values;
- promoting problem solving skills in the learner;
- providing the most needed information to the learners;
- making students to understand apply good usage of environmental resources;
- encourages the spirit of team work and cooperation among the students;
- leads student explore and discover meaningful ideas;
- prepare learners for all relational encounters in the environment;
- promote democratic-oriented citizen;
- promote active participation of learners in polity credence to the advice of Nwachukwu (2007), that should *“call to create and adopt new sets of paradigms that choose to see problem solving from new perspectives”*.

3. Conclusion

It could be recalled that Nigeria, as a country has all it takes to be at the forefront in terms of development among other countries of the world but unfortunately, development

process skill goes at a snail speed. Social studies education as a means of repositioning education for further sustainable national development in Nigeria no doubt has been discussed fully in this paper. However, it is pertinent to note that development is easily achieved when concerted effort by the entire society met. This paper therefore called for the embracement of social studies education for the development of Nigeria at the shortest-possible time.

4. Recommendations

The following recommendations were proffers for an urgent attention and consideration:

- 1) professionally qualified social studies education teachers should be employed to teach the subject in schools;
- 2) social studies teachers should be conversant with the goal of social studies education as a subject on the school curriculum;
- 3) social studies curriculum planners should plan the curriculum to reflect the contemporary and emerging needs of the society;
- 4) government should provide textbooks and instructional materials for the effective teaching and learning of social studies;
- 5) emphases on learning, performance, generalization as well as appropriate behaviours of social studies students should be encouraged and rewarded;
- 6) national integration, unity, loyalty and dedicated services should be inculcated in all citizens of the country.

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