

**INTEGRATING SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN
NIGERIAN SCHOOL CURRICULUM FOR THE
SUSTENANCE OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of Social Studies Education for meaningful National Development. The paper intends to address the concepts of Social Studies Teacher Education; the crucial, major components of National developments which Social Studies Teachers Education could address. This paper also reveals some issues that constitute hindrance to Social STUDIES education in its effort to attain National Development. IN conclusion, the paper recommends that the Teaching of Social Studies should be given better priority and concern in Nigerian schools

Introduction

The basic assumption of Social Studies is that Nigeria society is a community in which the members have certain things in common and certain rights, duties and responsibilities towards each other. It is not very well appreciated that this idea has not always been so. It could be postulated that Nigerians of today did not share this views and in fact believe that the only true community in Nigeria was to be found in the different religious organization. The various religious denominational groups found truer friendships in their religious brokers outside Nigeria than with their own kith and kin within Nigeria.

Apart from the religious attachment, there were the idiosyncrasies of ethnicity; one ethic group posing to be superior to the other groups in the same country. For example, the Yorubas in the country feels that apart from their race, there are no normal human beings; the Igbo thinks that they' are God-sent saviour in the country; an Hausa feels that his race is superior to others and that he is born to rule. Therefore, Social Studies which has been described as the key subject indispensable for the attainment of National Unity, has a great task of educating the various ethnic groups in Nigeria in the right way.

The Social Studies programme is built upon the belief that the three components that is, the subject area, society and "students provide the necessary data base for a sound curriculum for national development.

In the present context of Nigeria there is the simple fact that the network of rights and benefits possessed by the modern man or woman has become so complex

that many adults fail to either appreciate or understand. We therefore have the ridiculous situation of the benevolent designs of the state being defeated by the sheer ignorance of its citizens. The following questions deserve urgent reply from Social Studies educators. Why do the police officers stop the driver on the highway to collect 'his due'? Why does a commissioner or a minister receive back bribe before he will perform? Why does a judge demand money from his client? Why do electorates demand money before he will exercise his civic duties? Why does a lecturer demand for illicit outing with female studies before she could pass? Why does an ethnic group see itself as superior to others in the same country? Such problems as mentioned above are what Social Studies target to address:

To do this successfully, Social Studies educators ought to clarify in their mind some basic fundamental issues. One of these the role which Social Studies can play in nation building or national development. (National development is a desirable end for our country).

It is assumed that the purpose of Social Studies Education must be to promote positive attitude for national development in the right sense. The subject is equally obliged to have a very clear opinion and understanding on what the content of national development is and how the subject can be utilized to promote it. Social Studies Educators must have a definite view of what we wish for our nation, then he shall be in good position to plan the Social Studies education towards the desired effect.

Social Studies contribute to the development of two basic skills essential to the healthy growth of the ideas of democracy; thinking and decision making. Both skills are accomplished through learning experiences which involve problem solving, critical creative thinking and the development to abilities to interpret, analyze, and evaluate a situation. It is important to begin this process early in the life of a learner. It is equally necessary that the process be continued until it reaches the maturity level in the individual learner. The development task of learning to make independent decisions and to take appropriate control of one life is not an easy one. In order to respond to this task appropriately, the learner needs opportunities to develop necessary skills decision-making and problem solving, there-is no doubt that Social Studies provide this opportunity.

The Concept of Social Studies

Social Studies as a subject doesn't lend itself to a single definition as a result of its nature and different perspective held by different authors and experts. Hence, different classifications of definition of Social Studies had been given by different experts.

CESAC (1981) defines Social Studies as a subject which deals with man in society as a whole in order to understand the effects of these processes and use them to make progress.

NERC (1980) defines Social-Studies as: "A way of life, a way of viewing, conceptualizing and appreciating things, with special regards to their proper place and function in the re-ordering and management of man's total natural, social and technology environment.

Barth and Shermis (1967) define Social Studies as a "garden variety curriculum" which confuses students and teachers alike. They argue that some educators look on Social Studies as citizenship education; others treat Social Studies as science; and that still others interpret the essence of Social Studies as reflexive inquiry.

CESAC (1981) emphasize that Social Studies should not be regarded as civics, Economic, Geography, History, Religion, Sociology, or any of the traditional School subjects. And that it is not a mere combination of all these subjects; nor does it seek to replace them. It argues that because Social Studies deal with the total experience of man in his environments' it integrates all the other traditional subjects.

Social Studies, therefore include the relationship-between man and his environment and how they can use the resources of their environments to improve their conditions, those of their children, grand children and all future generations.

From the examples of various definitions of Social Studies given above, it is hope that prospective teachers will understand better why Social Studies is needed in the school curriculum. Also to realize that its function is not to replace any traditional subjects but rather to integrate, them in .building, A core of positively oriented citizenry who could accept the challenges of living and working towards making life worth living for the present and future generations. It is significant to note that Social Studies has, as its important mission, the task of helping the youth in developing competencies for effective management of their physical, social and technological environment. Generally, the Studies curriculum and instruction can contribute to the type of education today's youths needs in order to live a productive, meaningful and happy life.

What Is Education

Educations have been defined in different ways by several authors. Fafunwa (1974) defined education as the aggregate of all the processes by means of which a person develops abilities, attitudes, skills, and other forms of behaviour that are of positive value in the society in which he lives.

Bello (1991) describes education as the process of learning to live as a useful and acceptable member of the community to which one belongs and any other community in which one may find himself. Therefore, education is the means through which a person is developed morally, physically, intellectually, socially, emotionally etc.

What is Teacher's Education?

The writer has defined education as the commutative process of learning various intellectual abilities, skills, attitudes and the positive use to which such learning is put. Meanwhile, the teacher is seen as somebody who imparts a particular knowledge on a particular person as using particular methods with specific aims and objectives at the back of his mind and expecting certain outcomes. This implies that for anyone to be able to teach effectively and efficiently, he or she needs a particular form of preparation or orientation otherwise called training which is better called education.

In essence teacher education can be defined as the formal process of producing qualified and professionally competent teachers that will take charges of the nation's education system.

Therefore social studies teacher education could be seen as those preparation or orientation that is given to a teacher of social studies so as to qualify him as professionally competent social studies educator.

Aspects of National Development Which Social Studies is Expected to Address

Social Studies as an integrated discipline can contribute immensely to the goals of Nigerian education. The diverse spheres of Social Studies enable its learners to acquire wide knowledge, values and attitude necessary to face challenges of life. Some of the areas where Social Studies can contribute to the sustenance of national development are in the field of cultural harmonization and integration, perfection of individual excellence, community integration, political and economic efficiency etc.

Social Studies must assist in the harmonization and integration of different culture value of many ethnic group in Nigeria. Through the knowledge of Nigerian different cultures that it provides, the skills that it impact, its learners are able to adapt and tolerate with distinction, the cultural values of Nigerian people to enable its learners appreciate their cultural values in comparative basis.

The discipline equally provides to individual the attitudes and values necessary to attain individual excellence in life. Its study deals with patriotism, loyalty, self-sacrifice, sympathy for others, sense of harmony, judicious use of public utility.

On political efficiency, Social Studies equips its learners with knowledge of modern government and the need for building egalitarian society through self-sacrifice, loyalty and obedience to the ruling government. To this end, Social Studies deals with such political matters as the principles of democracy, political use of power, political parties, and other activities of various government organs.

It has been argued that successful development of political and judiciary system in any country depends on democratizing these systems, and ensuring that the largest possible members of the population participate. When students are lacking in the knowledge of the political and judiciary process of the country, it becomes an impediment in the process of national development. Therefore for successful development of a politically equitable and just system, we are obliged to consider

seriously in our Social Studies programme the need to develop communication skills and knowledge of Nigeria constitution among Social Studies Students.

Social Studies help in attaining economic efficiency in the country. Since economic efficiency entails proficiency in maximum utilization and management of scarce resources, Social Studies equip its learners with intellectual endowment necessary to achieve such goals. It extensively deal with human and natural resources, their means of management and proper utilization as well as efficient means of exporting those resources.

It should be noted that genuine national unity depends on the mutual respect which members of our linguistic groups have for one another, the promotion of multi-cultural art-forms and values within the context of Social Studies is the most obvious way. If we want a great member of our population to respect, appreciate and take part in our culture, then a multilingual approach to the teaching of Social Studies is a prerequisite for attainment of intellectual and educational development.

Problems of Sustaining National Development Through Social Studies Education

Social Studies is considered as one of the major subjects that can help to inculcate civil traits in the learners. That is why subjects like civic citizenship education, political education etc have been integrated into the social studies curriculum. Today Social Studies is taught at the various levels of Nigerian educational sector

However, certain problems in the Nigeria Society constitute hindrance to the sustenance of national development through Social Studies education. Falade (1997) expressed that it could be disturbing that despite the strong emphasis placed on the development of good citizenship through Social Studies education, the subject has not realized this goal. He pointed out that there are cases where final year Social-Studies students are disciplined for examination malpractice while others are alleged on one social misconduct or the other i.e. cultism, thuggery, violence, stealing etc.

Similarly, the training programme for the Nigeria Social Studies teachers in the Nigerian teacher training colleges put little or no emphasis on the teaching and evaluation of skills and values. Most Social Studies teachers in the Nigerian elementary schools cannot design or make use of value scales. Many Social Studies teachers in the elementary schools, are not skillful in adopting collaborative and child centred methods like values clarification, cooperative learning, role-play, simulation and inquiry methods.

Societal problem like that of bad leadership in the country is another serious obstacle to the sustenance of national development. Money, politics, assassination, election rigging, ethnic militias abuse of power, corruption, indiscipline etc characterize the Nigerian society. What Social Studies student learns in the classroom as the right values are the direct opposite of what operates in the large society. Consequently, learners receive instruction for the sake of knowledge so as to pass examination alone (falade. 1997).

Recommendations

There is an urgent need for the development of good citizenship for national development. This can be attained through Social Studies education. Hence the following recommendations are very important for building a civil society through Social Studies Education in Nigeria.

A number of issues arise from the foregoing. This call for the need for more thought and action to be devoted to the teaching and learning of Social Studies for meaningful development. A basic question which must be asked is, what should be the focus of Social Studies programme. To this we humbly submit that Social Studies education should be based on standard, justice and just, without these attributes Social Studies education cannot exist.

The implementation of Social Studies programme at the Senior Secondary School Level should not be delayed any longer. Also there is the need to allocate more time for the teaching of Social Studies particularly in our elementary schools. This will help Social Studies teachers to properly teach the various issues and concepts in the subject.

CONCLUSION

The major purpose of this paper has been to draw attention of Social Studies educator to his responsibilities in the process of teaching and learning; The Social Studies educator must be concerned with the components of National Development as well as mastering of the said, components in the classroom or community in such a way that it could offer to both students and Teachers an environment exemplified by mutual trust; a two way communication, and create a conducive environment that will ensure good decision making that will enhance better standard of work on the part of all the members of the learning community.

It is also discovered in this paper that one of the major aims, of Social Studies education in Nigeria is to equip the learners with the necessary civic values and traits. This is to enable them to contribute positively to the cultivation of the civil society. However, as already indicated, Social Studies is faced with some problems in Nigeria. These have hindered the extent to which the subject could be used as vehicle of National development.

In the face of this the effective training of Social Studies Teachers as well as the effective teaching of Social Studies at every level of the school system must be looked into for proper integration and application towards making Social Studies useful for national development and integration.

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