SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AS A CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper discussed some of the needed paradigm shifts for repositioning Social Studies Education for sustainable development in Nigeria. It went further to discuss the concept of sustainable development. It also looked into the views of various scholars about the achievement recorded by other developed nations of the world like America, Japan. France, China, India, Russia and many others that repositioned Social Studies Education in their various countries. It went further to x-ray the relevance of Social Studies Education in Nigeria for the sustainable development. Suggestions were made on how to make our dream a reality. These include, among others, restructuring of Social Studies Education curriculum with the focus of changing the lives of citizens and provision of adequate and qualified teachers in our institutions to teach the right values needed for the functional society.

Introduction

Social Studies is an eclectic discipline that can be effectively used in any nation to inculcate the right types of values to the citizens which will help in achieving sustainable development. Social Studies can be effectively used to change the lives of learners right from primary to tertiary institutions of learning in the country. This is because primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions are the access to the success and failure of the whole sustainable principles in the country. The learners are the products of the basic skills and knowledge acquired at the primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions of learning. Section 3 of the national policy on education referred to these levels of education as "the education given in an institution for learners between the ages of 6 to 12, 12 to 18, and 18 to 24 years and the rest of the learners' education system is built upon it. The National Policy on Education stated that these levels of education are the key to the success or failure of the whole education system of the learners. Ojo (2000) asserts that, "education, whether formal or informal is the sum total of all the process hy which a person develops ability, attitudes and other forms of behaviour of positive value in the society he or she lives. Obanya (2001) views education as the "effective organisation of the learner"s experiences so that his or her tendencies and power may develop in a manner satisfactory to himself or herself and to the society in which he or she lives". The development of these types of effective citizenship skills on the learners will assist Nigeria to achieve sustainable development.

Gele (2010) reflects that "lack of fund, infrastructure, furniture, over population, good library, textbooks, instructional resources, adequate qualified trained teachers in all subject areas, good feeding, security protection of citizens lives and properties, inadequate supervision and many other educational crisis are hindrance to sustainable development in Nigeria".
The use of Social Studies Education will assist in arresting this educational crisis in the country as this is one of the concerned of educationists which must be arrested using Social Studies as eclectic distillation of many subject disciplines. The researcher is mostly happy that intellectuals and stakeholders in education are earnestly committed to explaining the nature and dimension of such crisis with a view to proposing the way forward of handling Social Studies Education for the country.

Usman (2005) states that "1 go on to submit that education generally at all levels is in shambles not primarily because of inadequate resources but lack of effective citizens". Okam and Chukwu (2005) assert that Nigeria is plagued by multidimensional problems, a problem of socio-economic imbalance, problems of instability, problems which are antithesis to peace, and problems of inequality". The writer observed that Nigeria is facing serious illiteracy, grid,

ethnicity, and religious Bombers which contributed to the birth of militants in the Niger Delta, Boko Harams, and Suicide Bombers in the Northern parts of the country. The author is with the opinion that Social Studies Education will help in arresting upheavals in the country and in turn guarantee sustainable development in Nigeria.

These predicaments mentioned above have handicapped Nigeria's emancipation from her colonial history to a status which is based on an equal footing with other developed countries in the world of mankind. Gele (2010) reflects that Nigeria's problems of disharmony, instability, and lack of sustained and meaningful development thus:

There are barriers between groups, classes within the same political entity as a result of birth, occupation, language, race, and religion; there are barriers and increasing opportunities for individuals or groups so as to be enable to benefit from socio-economic opportunities which may be available to them.

Okam and Chukwu (2003) reflect that, our experiences are so sad and painful that there are national groups for despair amongst the Nigerian populace generally. In other

words, the bases of happiness for most Nigerians seem not to exist. Even if there existed, Nigerian leaders and human resources have not considered it sufficiently necessary to choose to source them - for securing peace and stability and for organising and entrenching development within the socio-political fabrics of a young democratic nation of the 21st century.

Concept of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is from "Our Common Future", also known as the Bruntland Report (2013); which stated that "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". According to Adams (2006), sustainable development is a vision of development that encompasses population, animal and plant species, ecosystems, natural resources, and that integrated concerns such as the fight against poverty, gender equality, human rights, education for all, human security, intercultural dialogue, etc. Babavvale (2007) defined sustainable development as a deliberate, and systematic policy of ensuring the survival of a state in such a way that the social, economic and political necessities that are imperative for the enjoyment of the good life are guaranteed now for incoming generation.

In order to be sustainable, development must combine three main statements: fairness, protection of the environment and efficiency; and this implies the preservation of the social, environmental and economic balance in the utilisation of human and natural resources (Legrand Report, 2012). In the

same vein, Mohammed (2002) identified the important facts on sustainable development viz:

- Increasing the availability and widening the distribution of basic life sustenance, such as food, shelter and protection;
- Raising the level of living in addition to higher income, provision of jobs, better

    education, and greater attention to cultural and humanitarian values, all of which serve to enhance maternal well-being, but also to generate greater individual and national self esteem; and
- Expanding the range of economic and social choice to individuals and nation by fencing them from servitude and dependence.

Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The state of the nation's economy shows that while Nigeria is growing appreciably at 8 to 9 percent per annum, the impact of this growth is not reflected in job creation and reduction in poverty. As the nation stands today, the vast majority, about 70% live below the poverty line, that is to say, youths, able bodied men and women are either unemployed or underemployed; a situation that has made them prone to criminality and dedication to subvert the Nigerian nation (Osunyikanmi, 2012).

Sustainable development is all about ensuring that while satisfying the needs of the present generation, a country's national resources are not depleted or jeopardised so as to meet the needs of future growth and secure the livelihoods of coming generation (Kayode, 2012). This implies that sustainable development ensures that a country is in charge of its economic destiny and national resources in order not to unfairly mortgage the interest of future generations. Sustainable development ensures the creation of national health, durable growth, economic progress, prosperity and an egalitarian and better society, based on equitable distribution of resources to engender social justice and dignity of the human person (Akinjide. 2011).

Ukpore (2009) stated that sustainable development is about "an improvement   of
lifestyles and well being; and the preservation of natural resources and ecosystem   for   the
present and future generations". According to Leonardi (2010),

Sustainable development, besides demanding cultural, political
and economic order change, also demands change in the attitude of
mankind who needs to develop a more complex and more
multidisciplanry vision on this development aiming to provide the
condition so that the society can reach it.

In Africa, especially the sub-sahara region, the problem is basically how to sustain democratic culture among the various ethnic groups in this region. In Nigeria, the problem is both ethnic and religious; a situation that has degenerated to suspicion among the various ethnic components in the country (Mustapha, 2006). In his discussion of ethnic factor in Nigerian politics, Mustapha stated that the fear of domination by one ethnic group had led to the psychological fear of discrimination. He believed that the fear of being outwitted by its ethno-regional elite contributed to the escalation of ethnic and political tension, while Iwilade (2007) believed what exists in Nigeria is a "conglomeration of mutually exclusive groups with fixations primordial bonds that drive them to violent civil conflict and deep suspicion".

In view of Matsuure (2005), Director of UNESCO, "sustainable development is a moral precept as well as scientific concept. It is closely limited to peace, human rights and equity as much as ecology and global warming". Therefore, to sustain peace will require equitable distributions of the resources to all the different ethnic groups. Ukpore (2009) corroborated this that sustainable development is only meaningful when every African, male and female, participates in the economic policy and social development of the society. The situation in Nigeria suggests knitting together the different ethnic group components form a nation-state tends to be highly favoured than environmental issues. Hence, ethnic integration will enhance the process and path of sustainable development in Nigeria. Akinjide (2011) argued that ethnic affiliations, inspired by ethnic consciousness and religious consideration for public offices has brought the country to the threshold of disintegration, hence the need for social reconstruction in order to achieve sustainable development. He emphasised that efforts at achieving reconstruction must be based on the promotion of social justice, fairness, equity, rule of law and critical thinking education for sustainable development in Nigeria.

The Need of Social Studies Education in Nigeria for Sustainable Development

The researcher's position on this paper is that Nigeria's hope as a governing sovereign nation depends squarely on the taste of re-organising Social Studies Education. The reason is that our present Social Studies Education curriculum needs to be restructured to meet the basic principles which must be taught at all levels of educational development. Many reputable educationists like Fafunwa (1994), Ukeje (2000), Okam (2004). and Obayan (2004) re-affirmed that studying Social Studies Education is perhaps the greatest and most potent tool that man has invested and developed ostensibly for his continued development and progress. Ukeje (2000) expatiates further that the

reason for this is because "education is so powerful, can heal, it can build up and it can lift up individuals, groups or societies for improvement and continued progress. Indeed, the need of Social Studies Education curriculum for sustainable development is mentioned in Ukeje's (2000) statement:

> Whatever you want in the society, you put it in the school; if you want an honest society, you teach honestly in the school; that the school is the manufacturer of the society; that school is a mirror of the society; and that the society is changed by the school.

Gele (2010) reflects that, "'it is an established truism that Social Studies Education is

largely instrumental for transforming developed countries of the world like United States of

America, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Russia, China, India, South and North Korea and

many others". Dewey gave an example that in Japan Social Studies Education is employed as

an instrument of national policy and used for inculcating "filial piety", benevolence, justice,

propriety, intelligence and fidelity". According to Deme\, "education is a powerful,

instrument, the instrument for unification of the elements within the Germane Empire". Gele

(2010) also established that it is known that hither defiled the whole world through organized

Social Studies Education, in Britain, the emphasis is largely the employment of Social

Studies discipline in training for character building for the success of monarchical welfare state. In France, Social Studies Education is largely used in sharpening the intellect and for the transmission of culture generally, in the United States of America, Social Studies Education is used for the development of individual qualities necessarily for good citizenship and for the success of democracy. In Russia. Social Studies Education is used for element of communism. Therefore, the author is also of the opinion that Social Studies Education can be used in Nigeria to achieve peace, in the Niger Delta region, ethnic problems in various states, for example Kaduna. Jos, Ife, Modakeke, tribalism, sectionalism, bribery and corruption, hatred, jealousy, anger, rigging of elections, cultism in institutions of learning, students unrest, prostitution, examination malpractice, armed robbery, kidnappings, 419 actions,

assassinations, forgery, suicide bombing, religious conflicts, and many other social vices in our society.

Conclusion

The contemporary conception of sustainable development is only meaningful when every citizen participates in the economic policy and social development of the nation. The situation in Nigeria suggests knitting together the different ethnic components to form a new and united nation tends to be highly favoured than environmental issues. Flence, Social Studies Education will enhance the process and path of sustainable development in Nigeria. This is because the subject deals with man and his environments. In essence, the identification of man and prudent management of our resources in Nigeria will give birth to the sustainable development that is our mirror.

Suggestions

In view of the foregoing, the researcher is with the opinion that certain measures should be strictly adhered to, using Social Studies Education as a catalyst for sustainable development in Nigeria.

- Re-structuring of Social Studies Education curriculum in Nigeria must be emphasised, it is the best process of changing the lives of young citizens.
- Provision of Adequate and Qualified Teachers: Government should make the provision of trained teachers that possessed knowledge, professional skill, model techniques of the curriculum content, personal qualities to teach in our schools and colleges.
- Public enlightenment campaign, symposium, workshop, conferences, seminar are required to preach the benefits from being sustainable.
- Loan and subsidies could be given to rural dwellers to explore and exploit their environments, in turn for them to make their contributions.
- Undesirable elements apprehended in the society should be dealt with according to law, this serves as deterrent to others with questionable character.

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