

REPOSITIONING SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Critical issues in Nigeria Education remains a challenge that will preoccupy all nations of the world that aspire for greatness. The concept is not only amorphous but vague as it touches on all aspects societal development-political, economic, social, cultural, technological, health and education. In this paper, the author with a sense of passion craved for the reposition of social studies as an enabling and stimulating instrument for the attainment of educational development. In search of sustainable education, the author identified social studies education as an effective instrument as it possess the potentials to achieve the five cardinal goals of education in Nigeria. The quest for sustainable education should begin with having to reposition social studies education to contribute to the growth of education. Social studies education, by its interdisciplinary character, builds in students a core of basic knowledge and ways of thinking that prepare them to participate in civic community life and health as active and informed citizens. Critical issues in Nigerian Education are multidisciplinary in nature and so, understanding them and developing resolutions to them require multidisciplinary education. This constitutes the defining aspects of social studies to include the building of perspectives and projections for the future educational system.

Keywords: *Reposition, Education, Multidisciplinary, Educational Development, Sustainable Education,*

Introduction

Barth and Morris (1976), cited in Umoru-Sule (2015), Social Studies is in everything that we do and in everything that we see from driving to work to watching the news, social studies is an imperative subject in our everyday life. Without it, who knows what mistakes we would have made by not being able to study our history and grow from our past? With the knowledge gained by observations and first-hand experience one begins to development a rational for the method in which the importance of the subject social studies education should be taught.

Osakwe (2009) Social Studies education in Nigeria is only three years younger than Nigeria's independent nation having emerged for the first time in 1963. In other words, Nigerian nation state and Nigeria Social Studies are about the same age which firmly established the fact that there is a positive correlation between social studies and educational development in Nigeria. In the voice of Akpochafo (2010), social studies examines the "why", 'where' and 'what' of educational development. He explained further

that social studies is a problem-solving discipline, that is geared, not only to open up the problems/shortcomings of development, but attempts at preferring solutions to critical issues in Nigerian education today. The uniqueness of social studies as a discipline of study in the school system, places it at a vantage position to contribute substantially towards the realization of our national educational goals. The goals of our National Policy on Education (2004) include:

- A free and democratic society
- A just and egalitarian society
- A united strong and self-reliant nation
- A great and dynamic economy
- Land full of bright opportunities for all.

Diana (1999), asserted that, social studies education, through its curricular offering, provides young people with opportunity for nurturing the virtues of self-realization, better human relationships, self and national economic efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, social and political advancement, scientific and technological, health advancement and development.

In support of the above, Oganwu (2008), since social studies is an integrative field of study and Nigeria is a political and cultural amalgam, the subject offers itself as a veritable vehicle for propelling the nation towards the realization of the goals of our National Policy on Education.

Umoru-Sule (2017), advocated for a Social Studies Education that will partner with Federal Republic of Nigeria in creating awareness and understanding about the ever evolving world around us, most especially education; she stressed that we need to reposition social studies education for educational development.

Social Studies Education and the National Policy on Education

Social studies incorporates insight from a variety of disciplines and involves a critical approach to learning about real world issues and challenges. From the nature and extent of crime, harm and victimisation, culture, identity and social justice problems, to understand how local, regional and global matters are governed and how conflicts are resolved. Social studies education teaches how to shape the way we live and bring a positive change to your community which the National Policy on Education stands.

In the words of Umoru-Sule (2018), in other to understand and appreciate the aims and objectives of social studies education. It is necessary to understand the basis in which these objectives are found. These objectives arises from a set of some identified critical issues, problems, needs or aspirations, therefore, objectives set becomes a means or a directive for their solutions or realization programme. This is the linkage with social studies education and the National Policy on Education which the overall philosophy and objectives of the Nation.

Objectives of Social Studies and National Policy on Education

The National philosophy of education was geared towards integrating the individual into a sound and effective citizen. The policy also stipulated that instructional method at the various levels of education should be directed and orientated towards inculcating the appropriate society values which includes among others:

- Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual.
- Moral and spiritual belief in interpersonal and human relationship.
- Implicit faith in the ability of the individual to make rational decision and to take responsibility for the choices made.
- Share responsibility for the common good of the society.
- Respect for the dignity of labour
- Promotion of the emotional, physical or psychological health of all adults and children. (National Council for Social Studies [NCSS],1994).

The philosophy of education is also directed toward self-realization, actualization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, good and effective citizenship including national consciousness, national unity and social cultural, political, scientific, economical, progress by identifying with national educational aims and objectives to bring about the following which social studies education teaches:

- Inculcate national consciousness and unity
- Inculcating of right type of values and attitude for the survival of the individual and Nigeria society.
- The training of the mind to the understanding of the world around.
- The acquisition of appropriate skills, attitudes, values and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his or her society.

From the above objectives, Mezieobi (1992), the quality of instruction of which this philosophy is linked explained the rationale as for which social studies for educational development in Nigeria stands, based on this, social studies can be categorized into the following to achieve its own aspects in the national philosophy.

Humanistic Education, that help students comprehend a side by side with those of others to other to develop the spirit of treat me as you will like to be treated. Do what you feel is good, citizenship education, that prepare the child for social responsibility so that he will not live on the society perpetually but should be able to contribute his quota to the development of mankind, intellectual education, introducing the child to the model of thinking and inquire into the social society, valuation education, that is inculcating in the individual some societal expected behaviour and attitude, group activities, norms, values and feelings necessary for good living.

Objectives of Social Studies Education

The dysfunctionality of the educational system during and after the colonial era provided the basic philosophy and policy for education. The desired changes were directed at the

need to make education more relevant and functional to the individual and society. It is universally accepted that social studies students need the chance to develop faith, self-expression and confidence in themselves. They also need the ability and skills to learn about the wider communities in which they live. Based on the general guidelines the following social studies education objectives were formulated:

1. Create an awareness and understanding of our evolving social and physical environment as a whole in its natural, man-made, cultural and spiritual resources together with the rational use and conservation of these resources for national development.
2. Develop a capacity to learn and to acquire certain basic skills including not only those of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and of calculation, but also those skills of hand and hand, together with those of observation, analysis and inferences which are essential and political judgement.
3. Ensure the acquisition of that relevant body of knowledge and information which is an essential prerequisite to personal development as well as to a positive personal contribution to the development of the nations.
4. Developing in young people positive attitude of togetherness, comradeship and cooperation towards a healthy nation, the inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness and justice at work and play as one's contribution to the development of the nation.
5. Develop a sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and interdependence of all members of the local community and the wider national and international community.
6. Promotion of an understanding of the social problems of their locality and finding possible solutions to them.
7. Development of the ability to think reflectively and come to independent conclusions.
8. Creation of awareness that discipline is essential for an orderly society and
9. Demonstration of flexibility and willingness to accept necessary changes within a system that is, education, government, or law, for the good of all (Federal Republic of Nigeria, (1977), Arisi (2011), Arokoya (2012), Adaralegbe (1987), Obilo and Ahmadu (1982) as stressed in Umoru-Sule (2018), that we need a healthy, vibrant and ebullient students.

How Responsive is Social Studies Education to the Critical Issues in Nigeria Education

Because educational development is all embracing of which national development is a critical aspect, social studies plays a major role in the critical issues of education.

Social studies education programmes have as a major purpose of promoting civic competence – which is knowledge, skills and attitudes required of students to be able to assume the status of citizens in our democratic process. It is the duty of Social Studies to educate students who are committed to the ideals and values of our education and who are

able to use knowledge about their community, nation, and world along with skills of data collection and analysis, collaboration, decision-making and problem solving. For students who have these commitments, knowledge and skills will be most capable of shaping their future and sustaining the educational institutions of Nigeria.

The content of Social Studies education is so vast that it prepares young people for full adult lives in this complex and dynamic world. This kind of preparation falls in line with Law (2004), dispositive curriculum that the global requirements for education in recent times including promoting life-long education, re-emphasizing the quality of learners experiences, reorganizing subjects into key learning areas so as to develop broad knowledge base, and developing in the learner the ability to think critically and be innovative. This kind of education above afford the products of the system the ability to respond to social goals, economic realities and future life-challenges.

Because social studies education is responsive to the challenges of future life, it should be strengthened as a major pedagogical paradigm shift for use to actualize the quest for educational development. That is why Enoh (2009), was quite specific in his presentation on education for national development and pointed out that we need to be precise as to what aspect of the critical issues in Nigeria education we are interested in and to which education must make a contribution in developing. Just like the Biblical injunction of prophet Isaiah who said “here am I send me”, so is social studies when it was introduced as a transformative discipline to yield the wounds of the civil war in Nigeria and chart a course for national integration and development. Social Studies Education should be reinvigorated and adopted as Millennium Pedagogical initiative of addressing c issues in Nigeria education also perspectives and projections for the future.

Conclusion

Social Studies Education is important and relevant in tackling the critical issues in Nigeria education. For a developing country such as Nigeria, the place of Social Studies Education and critical issues in education which helps in creating awareness and understanding about the ever evolving critical issues situations around us cannot be overemphasized. This would help us get over the prevailing critical issues in education and thereby achieve an education free of critical issues.

Recommendations

1. The training programme in Social Studies Education should be subjected to periodic evaluation to attune it to the changing societal demands and modern trend and realities in education
2. Government should show positive commitment to the effective implementation of the social studies learning activities.
3. The teaching of social studies education must be beyond chalk and talk. It will be well exposed to the new innovative teaching methods such as problem solving method, inquiry, discovery method among others. The subject methodology should be repackaged in a way that the teaching of Social Studies will bring about perspectives and projections for education future.

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