

SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AS AN INTERVENTION TOOL FOR A DWINDLING ECONOMY

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Abstract

In a dwindling economy, the need for Social Studies education remains the cornerstone of preparing the young learners to acquire skills, knowledge and values that will enhance the quality of good democratic life that will get rid of dwindling economy and fosters national development. This paper is therefore on Social Studies education as an intervention tool for a dwindling economy. The paper also examines learners' activity skills as an instructional strategy that could be used to improve the learning and internalization of Social Studies values, as against the conventional techniques that rely heavily on lecturing, dictation and note copying that will not help to inculcate in the learners desirable values, knowledge, social skills and attitudes needed for getting rid of a dwindling economy.

A country that lacks the spirit of nationalism and patriotism always has crises in all dimensions of its social life. In this type of country, development would continue to elude the nation, paving way to a dwindling economy if no tangible effort is made to cultivate and nurture a sense of unity, tolerance, patriotism, honesty and respect for human dignity (Falade, 2008 in Akuson, 2016).

In some third world countries like Nigeria that is witnessing inter-religious and ethnicity crises together with the challenges of national development, there is a steady ethical decline and moral degeneration which has manifested in the production of wrong caliber of citizens who are corrupt, violent in nature, drug traffickers, undisciplined to the core, nepotic, greedy, power drunk and other fraudulent activities have frustrated efforts at forging a sense of national cohesion thereby getting rid of a dwindling economy.

Efforts made by some of these third world countries to cleanse their countries from unethical codes and immoral acts that result in a dwindling economy sometimes ended up in futility, due perhaps, to lack of commitment by leadership and unpatriotic behaviour of the citizenry. What is missing in all these efforts is a lack of systematic education process of training the mind and the intellect to the orientation of the people

from greedy, selfish, chaotic, dishonest and unjust living to that of seeing fellow Nigerians as equal members of the polity with a shared sense of responsibility. In this case, Social Studies education can be seen as all-encompassing involving the training of the mind and the intellect to imbibe growth and development and getting rid of a dwindling economy (Mezieobi, Domike, G. C. &Osakwe, 1996).

This paper contends that Social Studies education will impact positively on the lives of the learners as an intervention tool for getting rid of a dwindling economy in any country if the right teaching strategies, such as learner's activity skills is used in the teaching/learning process.

Conceptual Classifications

Social Studies education provides knowledge; skills and attitudes that will enable people understand their physical and human environment in order to act as responsible citizens (Mezieobi, 2013). Social Studies is a programme of study which a society uses to instill in students the knowledge, attitudes and actions which it considers important concerning the relationship human beings have with each other, their world and themselves (Kissock, 2001).

According to Nkire (2016), Social Studies is the study of man (human being) and his interaction with the environment. She also stated that Social Studies is the study that helps learners to discover and properly utilize their inherent human nature as political, social, economic, religious, cultural, learning (educational), law-related (legal) as well as science and technological beings for the general good of the society. Nkire went further to state that Social Studies help students to experience the interconnectivity between their own lives and what is being learned. As such, it helps to facilitate learning by equipping learners with functional and foundational knowledge, skills, positive attitudes and right values for themselves, fellow humans, the other environmental resources and the world around them, not just for their own good alone but also for socio-cultural upliftment of their society.

Teaching competences, according to Mezieobi & Mezieobi (2013) in their work refer to demonstrable and professionally acquired specified requisite, teaching skills, abilities and attitudes which are essential for effective teaching. It means proficiency, dexterity and expertness. It is an art, trade or techniques, particularly, one requiring use of the hands and body. Mezeiobi and Mezieobi went on to state that the possession of a repertoire of these prerequisite teaching competences, abilities and attitudes span beyond the three domains of learning, and therefore, may not be restricted only to them. Certificates and credentials possessed, in the context of Nigeria, are no ample evidence of the possession of the teaching competences. It is the observable ability of the teacher to demonstrate these skills or competences, in reality, in and out of the Social Studies classroom setting that confers on him the competent teacher status with real mastery of the teaching competences.

Learners' activity skills is one of the teaching competences that involve the relationship between the teacher, students and materials. It is a strategy, an art, trade or techniques, particularly one requiring use of hands and body. They also involve the organization of contents, the manner in which they are presented to the students and the activities to be carried out by the students and the teacher. According to Farrant (1980), it is one of the keynotes of modern education. Formerly, there was very little of activity and students had to sit up straight with arms folded for lesson after lesson, while the teacher droned on teaching, perhaps, the capes and bays of South America. All these have changed and teachers make notes in their lesson notes of just what student's activities they propose to introduce into their lessons. They use activities because they know that children learn best by doing, and find interest and enjoyment in activity (Farrant, 1980).

Why the Need for Social Studies Education as an Intervention Tool for a Dwindling Economy

The higher the quality of the education in a country, the better the training its citizenry receives for effective participation in national development thereby erasing a dwindling economy. Nigeria for example, is at crossroads in her pursuit for developmental growth. This is due largely to the neglect of its educational system especially in the area of the implementation of the curriculum which would have instilled positive value on the nation (Akuson, 2016).

The state of instability and chaos emanating from fear of one ethno religious group dominating the others has led to unhealthy rivalry for the control of political and economic power (Olu-Adeyemi, 2006). This aggressive competition among social groups has robbed Nigerians of social justice and fairness which are the hallmarks of democratic governance. The fact is that the political environment becomes strikingly corrupt with all sorts of anti-social vices like nepotism, embezzlement, falsification of account, etc. At a very high level, one may tend to attribute social decadences in Nigerians to that of poor leadership (Achebe, 1983). While corrupt leadership cannot be totally dismissed with the wave of the hand, it has failed to explain why both military and civilian leaders in succession have not been able to stamp out corruption in spite of their promises to do so (Umezi, 2000). The source of corrupt practice and dwindling economy in Nigeria can be located within the prevalent value system that even makes the implementation of education system unworkable. The prevailing value system glorifies graft as a necessary means to an end.

The allegations of corruption that have channeled the collective resources of Nigeria into dubious hands like the N195bn pension scam, the \$6bn subsidy scam defrauded from subsidy fund and even the car purchase scandal of inflated rate of N225m is something of great concern that have portrayed the bad image of Nigeria thereby leading to underdevelopment. Also, holding periodic election as a means of

unseating corrupt incumbents and to install “angels” would be counterproductive as far as they are all part and parcel of the decadent social values (Umezi, 2000).

The anticorruption organization like the EFCC has tried in their duties but their jobs are not good enough to stamp out corruption because it does not address the fundamental issue of re-orientating the value system in Nigeria. This can be done through Social Studies education. It is through Social Studies education that ethical and value question can be resolved (Ezegbe, 2012). The mentality of the people in Nigeriatowards government property is an issue of concern. Either due to ignorance or miss-education, people sees governmental properties as no man’s property. Their ignorance could not enable them to see the connection between the tax they pay and the property the tax provides for their comfort (Umezi, 2000). The looted public funds are spent on intangible and unproductive personal things that deny the economy of investment and increased productivity resulting to a dwindling economy.

Intervention for a Dwindling Economy through Social Studies Education

Social Studies as a conscientizing and mobilization subject has been used by many countries of the world like United States of America, Britain and Japan, etc., to solve their political problems (Ezegbe, 2012). Through Social Studies education, individuals in a plural society are systematically trained in social skills, values and attitudes that help them build an egalitarian society devoid of discrimination and social vices. Social Studies education helps in the cultivation of patriotic and nationalist spirits that help to oil the wheel of developmental process and eradication of economy decay. Social Studies enables students to appreciate the social norms and values of their local community and of the country as a whole. It helps young people to develop competences that will enable them deal with, and to some extent, manage the physical and social forces of the world in which they live. It helps to raise a generation of people who can think themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour and live as good citizens. Social Studies education constantly appeals to the conscience of learners that stealing is a crime against humanity. And that it is also barbaric to loot and stash away public funds in foreign accounts when millions of fellow country men and women have no jobs, electricity, pipe-borne water, roads, hospitals and even food to eat (Umezi, 2000).

Mezieobi (2017) contends that Social Studies education enables the citizens to be well informed about their rights and responsibilities and gather facts about their socio-political processes and to reject ethno-centric views in preference of national consciousness. This is because ethno religious conflicts have caused indelible damages to lives and properties thereby bringing the economy to a standstill (Adagonye, 2015). The Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970, the Maitatsine religious riot of 1980, the Kafanchan religious crisis, the Zango-Kataf crisis, the Tiv-Jukun disturbance, the Niger-Delta struggle for resource control and the Boko-Haram insurgency in the North-East

were all fought on the altar of greed which can be traced to poverty of value system as a result of dwindling economy.

Learners' Activity Skills as an Instructional Strategy for Internalization of Social Studies Values

The National Policy on Education, FRN (2014) declared "the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society". What is an issue is not the concepts to be taught, but how can the values taught impact positively on the learners? The general objectives of Social Studies education, according to Ezegbe (2012) are

- (1) To give man adequate information and knowledge about his society and the wider world.
- (2) To create in man, an awareness and appreciation of the benefits and results of scientific and technological discoveries and inventions and make him see how these affect his everyday life.
- (3) To help man develop his intellect, skills, abilities and competences, and promote in him the spirit of enquiry, discovery, thinking and curiosity which will act as a spur to further investigations.
- (4) To make him know, what the society expects of its members so that he will be able to judge his actions as well as those of others.
- (5) To formulate man with the values and norms of his society, and thus socialize him in accordance with such norms. This will enable him improve and perpetuate his society.
- (6) To help man become a good citizen and develop the necessary values and attitudes needed in a democracy.
- (7) To make man know that differences exist among individuals, environments, pursuits, capabilities and productions; and to make him realize that such differences as well as human rights, should be appreciated and respected.
- (8) To create in man an awareness and appreciation that community life in any human society is based on co-operation and inter-dependence at all levels right from the family to the international level.
- (9) To expose man to the problems of his society and then lead him to develop appropriate functional approaches to the solution of such problems.
- (10) To help man develop proper value judgment and ability to criticize, analyze, select and objectively evaluate issues and events in their proper perspectives.
- (11) To enable man develop psychomotor skills involving locomotor and non-locomotor skills, manipulative and creative skills, perceptual and physical abilities.
- (12) To help man develop valuable and socially acceptable concepts, ideas and philosophies of life, etc.

Despite the implementation of Social Studies education in the nation's secondary schools, there seems to be no hope of achieving these objectives. The nation

is still witnessing practices like looting, examination malpractices, certificate forgery and ethno-religious violence, etc. Social Studies education may not realize its general objectives of producing responsible citizens because of the predominance of the conventional lecture methods of teaching which encourages rote learning (Adesina & Adeyemi, 2005). Learners' activity skills is one of the teaching competences that can help in easy inculcation of appropriate values and skills that can lead to progress and national development.

Teaching for the inculcation of desirable social skills, attitudes and values requires interactive techniques such as learners' activity skills to appeal to learners' sense. A good teacher will always use activity as a means to an end and select with care the activities he uses so that they serve best the process of learning. The teacher's role is that of a facilitator who has a personal relationship with students and guides their growth and development. In this role, the teacher helps the students to explore new ideas (Pardo, 2004). Also Pardo (2004) asserted that activity can be used in developing a skill such as reading, drawing, singing, to discover new knowledge through investigation, experiments, explaining, and to apply knowledge learned to useful ends such as care of human beings, care of animals, farming, modeling, and so on.

Joof, Mezieobi and Amadi (1994) suggested that teaching in Social Studies should be predominantly student-oriented interactive process in which the learners actively participate and acquire significant learning experiences under the teacher who serves as a guide and a facilitator. A situation whereby a teacher dominates the class without having the learners at the center or even getting them involved in the activities in the classrooms is very discouraging and not result oriented, Pardo (2004) asserted that learning becomes better practice with active involvement.

Studies have indicated that teachers, who use learners' activity skills in their process of teaching which emphasize active students' engagements in hand-on opportunities, improve attitudes towards learning and indicate a positive effect of achievement (Umoren, 2007; Mkpa, 2003; Onwuka, 1996). Thus, learning activities must entail participation from both students and teachers, determine, what students need, and should adapt to meet the needs of each learner in order to progress in learning. Efficient teaching in schools demands of the teacher a sound knowledge of all that the pupils must know, together with an ability to relate the content, methods, sequence and pace of his work to the individual needs of his pupils using appropriate teaching competences such as learners' activity skills. All studies carried out on learners' activity skills and reports recorded are result oriented and significantly influence academic achievement (Umoren, 2001; Nelson, 2004; Inyang & Akpan, 2009; Jackson, 2010 & Kounin, 2014). All the studies are indicators that learners' activity will at any time yield better results than conventional lecture method as far as students' performance and achievement are concerned in any subject (Kounin, 2014).

Conclusion

The social vices being witnessed in some countries like Nigeria, such as ethnic and religious quarrels, bribery and corruption, examination malpractice, favouritism, dishonesty and lack of social justice can be tackled head-on if Social Studies pay particular attention to the pedagogical processes that have the capacity to re-orientate the values and attitudes of the learners.

The approach to tackling social ills, like War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC) and the use of anti-grafts agency such as EFCC to jail corrupt government officials will make no significant impact in character reformation of Nigerians. It is through the training of the mind and intellect to appreciate the need for honest living as embedded in Social Studies education that can move society from a dwindling economy to a higher and better level of economy with national progress and development.

Recommendations

The following recommendations if adhered to will tremendously change the prevailing situation of Nigeria's value system, such as in Nigeria that has constituted obstacles to the development process thereby witnessing dwindling economy.

- (1) The activity-based instructional strategy such as learners' activity skills should be adopted in secondary schools especially in teaching Social Studies.
- (2) The teacher-training programmes in Nigeria should include teaching competences in order to equip the would-be teachers with techniques, strategies and skills of teaching for better results.
- (3) Social Studies specialists should collaborate with NERDC to produce suitable materials of teaching competences for the Nigerian learners.
- (4) Teachers should always expose students to a variety of guided tasks, activities and interaction processes in classrooms so as to inspire and sustain students' interest in learning.
- (5) The use of ICT for students to access current information is desirable.
- (6) Government should ensure that student-teacher ratio of one teacher to twenty-five students is achieved. This is to ensure adequate interaction between the teacher and the students especially when it concerns teaching values that need demonstrations.

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