

# SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*This discourse focuses attention on Social Studies Education as a tool for sustainable development in the transformation agenda in Nigeria. It discusses the concept of political socialization as well as the importance of social studies education to students and the society. It also postulate that social studies education helps in bringing up good citizens, inculcating in the learner the idea of co-operation, loyalty, tolerance, respect for others, law of the land and constituted authority. It also outlined some of the problems facing social studies education as well as suggesting or making some recommendations for further studies. Some of the recommendations are that there should be objectivity in politics, most especially the political leader, teachers should strive to make social studies education more functional by relating learning experience to everyday life in the school and community. Political and religious leaders should be honest, secure and exhibit characters that will improve national unity rather than promoting conflicts in Nigeria.*

Social Studies Education leads to the production of enlightened and well articulated individuals. Political education enables one to perform one's social-civic and political functions more effectively so that the production of good citizens is enhanced. The prevailing situation in the Nigerian Society is characterized by indiscipline, bribery and corruption, tribalism, election mal-practices and unstable government. Any change in leadership is usually characterized by rigging, annulment or coup d'etat and revolt. For example in 1993, Nigeria had three governments which did not allow for continuity. A review of Nigeria's political history reveals that this is the third elected civilian government that has completed the first tenure of four years successfully in office as stipulated by the nation's constitution without any interruption.

This constitutes great concern that calls for the attention of every lover of democracy, development and progress. To correct this instability, the Nigerian government has stressed that a conscious effort should be made to teach the tenets of

good citizenship at all levels of education through Social Studies in order to achieve good political socialization in Nigeria.

### **Social Studies Education**

This education discipline is saddle with the responsibility of inculcating political socialization and appropriate forms of political behavior in the citizen, so as to ensure a corruption- free nation through the creation of political awareness in Nigerians. (Tapper 1996).

Social Studies Education has been recognized as a discipline assigned with the task of promoting political consciousness and participation of students through both its curricular and co-curricular activities with the main goals of creating a new political culture that will transplant the multitude of negative factors that have hitherto characterized the Nigerian society today. NPE (2008)

### **Political Socialization**

Notable scholars have analyzed the concept of political socialization in different ways as a tool for sustainable development in Nigeria through social studies education. Some of them are;

Dennis (2010) defines political socialization as those development processes through which people acquire political orientations and pattern of behaviors. Political Socialization is the internationalization of political knowledge, attitudes, values and norms as well as its transmission from generation to generation, through Social Studies Education.

Almond (1996) sees political socialization as the process of induction into the political culture, it's product is a set of attitudes, cognition, value, standards, feelings towards the political system, feelings towards the input of demand and its authorities output.

According to Adekeye (2000), Political Socialization also involves the process of learning the acceptable political attitudes and behavior in both formal and informal settings.

### **Importance of Social Studies Education in Sustainable Political Socialization in Nigeria**

The inculcation of Social norms, promotion of civil awareness and provision of political learning assist in the transformation of Nigerian Political Socialization through Social Studies Education.

Tapper (1996), sees Social Studies Education as one of the school disciplines saddled with the responsibilities of ensuring political socialization in learners, and therefore, play several roles. These roles include.

**1. Promotion of Civil Awareness**

Social Studies Education helps pupils, learners/students and citizen of a nation to learn their basic right, obligations and responsibilities as stipulated in the nations constitution. Right from the primary school, the pupils are taught their right, duties and privileges at home, school and the society at large. These rights include the right to live, right to vote and be voted for, freedom of association, movement, religion and expression. It also enables them to know their civic rights, privileges as well as their possible roles as participating members of the society.

**2. Promotion of Comprehensive Political Education**

Social Studies cover the three main domains of learning, the affective, cognitive and psychomotor. The cognitive content includes themes such as arms of government e.g. Legislative, Executive and the Judiciary. Others are pressure groups, power and authority, leadership and followership, right, obligation and responsibility and rule of law. The effective contents cover loyalty, respect for ethic and religious diversity, cooperation, patriotism, respect for others and the government. The psychomotor content on the other hand cover participation in patriotic rituals such as singing of the National anthem, reciting the national pledge and saluting the National flag, participating in community services such as building of bridges, clearing of roads, building of market stalls as well as participating in sports.

**3. Training of Citizenship**

Okam (2008) asserted that social studies constitutes one of the curricular arrangements accepted for laying strong foundation for the purpose of creating effective citizens. For example, in social studies, the pupils are taught qualities of a good citizen such as being democratically minded, obedience to the laws of the land, willingness and prompt payment of taxes, casting of ballot of thought fullness, respect for freedom and not interfering with the enjoyment of the right of others in the society.

**4. Social Studies help in the Inculcation of Basic Societal Norms**

It is believed that educational establishments are designed to socialize children into acceptance of basic societal norms and beliefs. The major task of formal political education in Nigeria rests in social studies. For example, effective and cognitive orientations to politics and public affairs serve as focus to instruction in social studies classroom. Social studies teach about politics in classroom substantially more than other teachers of other subjects (Sigel 1999).

Today, in Nigeria, there is emphasis on teaching of values and norms such as co-operation, tolerance, honesty, dignity of labour, obedience, integrity, respect for elders and constituted authorities as well as religious tolerance in social studies among children in the classroom and the society at large.

Enhancement of political socialization through socialization studies instruction. As a unique area of study, social studies represent one of those modern curricular arrangements which capitalize on the use of method to sustain the reason for its existence as an important subject area.

According to Okam, (2008), this is to say that social studies is expected to be taught in such a way as to develop in pupils or students, socially, politically desirable attitudes, and skills which will help to transform Nigerian politics into a more transparent and sustainable one as well as instill in our politician the spirit of honesty and sincerity as a leader.

### **Problems of Political Socialization in Nigeria**

Despite the political usefulness of political socialization, there are some problems which affect it and hinder it from achieving its objectives. Some of these problems are, (Tapper, 1996).

#### **1. Poor Political and Intellectual Honesty**

A major problem of political socialization in Nigeria is the lack of intellectual and political honesty. Our children from very early ages are exposed to conflicting experiences in our social and political behavior. Even though social studies teaches the values of honesty, the child is surrounded by corruption from the home, the school, the society at large and even the religious institutions are not left out of this problem.

#### **2. In-Objectivity**

The leaders do not practice what they preach. For example, the child is taught that he is a citizen of a united country where there is equality of access and opportunity, he is taught, that sense of national identity should transcend parochial, ethnic, state or religious sentiments while his experience in the society is affected and influenced by clear discrimination and an open conflict on basis of place of birth and religion.

#### **3. Poor Political Orientation Among Politicians**

For Dennis (2010), most politician do not know what they represent, neither the people nor their interest. Every politician is expected to understand the concept of political socialization in order to be able to represent his people and unite the nation through the knowledge of the constitution and its proper interpretation. Most leaders do

not understand the meaning of national unity; they rather fight for their religious and cultural interest.

#### **4. Poor Foundation of Social Studies Education**

Due to funds and negligence on the part of government, social studies education which serves as a tool for sustainable development and political socialization in Nigeria has been relegated to the background with poor attention by government, poor teaching learning facilities, poor classroom for teaching and learning of social studies, inadequate teaching staff to implement its curriculum etc, have reduced the interest of people in social studies education. (Almond, 1996).

#### **Conclusions**

Social studies education is a discipline saddled with the responsibility of inculcating political socialization, appropriate forms of political behavior in citizens and ensuring corruption free nation.

For social studies education to be employed in achieving the goal of political socialization in Nigeria the school alone should not be saddled with the responsibility; rather all hands must be on deck. The home and other socializing agents and the larger society must ensure that what the child experiences in the society does not negate that which is being taught in the school.

#### **Recommendations**

For better understanding of political socialization, national and inter-national politic as well as inculcation of national unity in Nigeria, social studies education must be paid proper attention since it is the most important organ through which relevant political information can be transmitted to the pupils/students. Based on these, the following suggestions or recommendations are made for further studies.

1. Full attention should be given to social studies in order to help teach and improve political socialization in Nigerian and thereby improve and inculcate the sense of National Unity among Nigerian citizens.
2. Political leaders should be objective in their administration, as well as practice what they preach, as well, religious leaders should live by example. This will help to improve political socialization.
3. There should be adequate intellectual, political and religious leaders in the nation who are honest and upright before their followers. This will help the followers to manage issues which can cause national conflicts in the nation.
4. In order to achieve the objectives of political socialization through social studies education, emphasis must be placed on the application of techniques of inquiry and

discovery methods, inductive and deductive approaches in teaching – learning situation.

5. Teachers should strive to make social studies education more functional by relating learning experience to everyday life in the school and community.
6. Social studies education could be made real by teachers through providing pupils the opportunity to participate in planning and engaging in purposeful projects and by engaging these pupils in civic activities and co-operating with other communities, institutions on issues that have bearing on political socialization.

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