

VISION AND MISSION OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

In any organization there is always a focus. The focus is for the good of the organization if properly implemented. Education is conceived in this paper as a key that opens the gate of modernization and globalization. Nigeria is considered as a plural society with basic characteristics of a plural society. Social studies is considered in this paper as a school subject that could be used to accomplish Nigeria's educational goals in the 21st century. The vision and mission of social studies compliments that of the National Policy on education, which is the focus of this paper.

Introduction

The issue of education in the 21st century cannot be over-emphasized or over flogged. This is because an educated society is an enlightened one. Education is an instrument for development of any country. The more a nation or society is educated the more they advance. In other words, education is a major factor for development. Minus education, neither man nor woman is complete. One may have shelter, food and clothing but vision is developed and accomplished majorly through education. It is therefore a pre-condition for progress in development and poverty education in the 21st century. Education enables people to be more productive and earn more money. Education leads to improvement in health, nutrition and basic skills of literacy and numeracy and ability to read and write.

Every society or nation, developing or developed has goals that it has identified for education according to her needs since education is seen as a powerful instruments of change. That is why education is adopted in Nigeria as a powerful tool for effecting national development. It is very important and imperative therefore to examine the vision and mission of education in the 21st century in Nigeria. This we intend to do through the contribution of social studies education.

It is important at this point to define our concepts.

Vision

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2000) defines vision as an idea, or picture in one's imagination, a dream. The power of perceiving by imagination or clear thinking. Something seen as an imagination, in a dream and in one's thought.

Mission

Mission is also defined as one's business or purpose in life. It is also seen as a particular work you feel it is your duty to do. These two concepts go hand in hand. This is because Vision leads to mission. In other words or goals our dreams in life create a purpose in life.

The concept "social studies" have been defined by many scholars. According to Dubey et al (1980), "Social studies represents an integration of the social sciences and the humanities". The subject is basically concerned with the study of man in his social and physical environments. In this context, Akinlaye et al (1996:3) agree that, it deals with man's interactions with his physical, economic, cultural, scientific and technological environment. Kisko (1981) defines it as a programme which society uses to instill into their younger ones attitude, belief, knowledge and values considered worthwhile. The focus of social studies therefore is citizenship education.

Aims and Objectives of Social Studies

The broad aim of social studies is directly related to the goals of education in Nigeria. These aims are translated into the Nigerian national objectives which include civil competence, better human relationship and the improvement of self image of the people. Social studies is therefore, identified as one of the school subjects that can help realize the goal of these national objectives. In addition, knowledge skills, attitudes and values, aspirations and social participation are the main aims that are

stated in many social studies programmes. This, however, depends on the needs, priorities and aspirations of specific countries.

In Nigeria, the Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) (1971) has established the goals of social studies as:

(i) to develop children's self confidence and initiative based on their understanding of their accomplishment, potentialities and worth, their desire for continued learning; (ii) to develop social attitudes of cooperation, participation, tolerance, open-mindedness, integrity, hard work, compassion for the less fortunate, trustworthiness and an appreciation of the dignity of man and liberty; (iii) to develop attitudes favorable to national development, a willingness to accept change in accordance with the people's will, a spirit of national consciousness, interest and ability to be involved and participate in the social heritage and in innovation; (iv) to develop a power of creativity, resourcefulness, imagination and social awareness, and critical judgment for constructive and effective thinking.

The above broad goals of social studies are translated into various school programmes at primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. These goals of social studies programme cover all aspects of the life of man in society, particularly, those aspects that are necessary in ensuring full and complete development of the individual. These aims can be summarized in the following;

Knowledge Acquisition

Social studies assists the learner to acquire knowledge about the people around him, knowledge of facts, ideas and concepts across the curricula. The learner gets acquainted with happening of people and society in his immediate and distant environments.

Intellectual Development

Social studies assists the learner by equipping him with skills and abilities of rational decision making. This is to facilitate his understanding of facts, ideas and principles with which to judge, analyze and evaluate issues and problems.

Attitude Development

Social studies enables the learner to acquire healthy and worthwhile attitudes and values. These values are core democratic values such as honesty, hard work, integrity, cooperation, fair play and respect, etc,

Skill Development

Social Studies enable the learner to develop skills such as the manipulative, perceptual, and social skills. Such skills as listening, reading, observation, reporting and communication are acquired in the course of social studies instruction (Asabe et al (ed), 2002) Pg. 3-5.

Vision and Mission of Social Studies Education in the 21st century

In 1977, the federal government issued out the National Policy on Education (NPE) as a policy document that would guide national development strategies. It is interesting to note that the premise of the policy clearly stated that; "----- no policy on education can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy objectives of the nation" (NPE, 1981:7).

The policy is deliberately designed to address the existing contradictions, ambiguities, and lack of uniformity in educational practices in different parts of the country to ensure an even and orderly development of the nation for the stability of the Nigerian state.

It should be clearly pointed out that just as the integrated social studies is adopted in Nigeria as an instrument for addressing the weakness in the colonial social studies with separate academic approach that educates the Nigerian child outside his environment, the new National Policy on Education is an all enhancing wholistic educational strategy designed to address also the **weakness** of the colonial education, for effecting national development through the cultivation of skills, attitudes and knowledge of responsible citizenry and national-building.

The relationship between social studies and the National Policy on Education is therefore that of complementation, the policy creates the basis for social studies existence as social studies plays the role of an instrument

through which the national policy objectives, its philosophy objectives and national educational objectives could be actualized. The integrative approach of the Nigerian philosophy of education, which is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizenship is in agreement with the philosophy of the Nigerian social studies education.

Thus, at all levels of social studies instruction, the orientation is geared towards inculcating the following values clearly presented in the National Policy on Education as the development of

- (1) respect for the worth and dignity of individuals;
- (2) faith in man's ability to make rational decision;
- (3) moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relations;
- (4) shared responsibility for the common good of the society;
- (5) respect for the dignity of labour, and
- (6) promotion of the emotional physical and psychological health of all children.

The basic ideas identified in the policy as self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as the desire to achieve social, cultural economic, scientific and technological progresses are the fundamental objectives of social studies (Iyela et al (2002) Pg 3 - 8).

The actualization of the above is the vision and mission of social studies education in the 21st century.

At another level, one can also say that the national philosophy objectives and the national educational objectives are indeed integrated, working in harmony and jointly determined to achieve the following progressive ideas in the Nigerian nation:

- (1) The inculcating of national consciousness and national identity;
- (2) The inculcation for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- (3) Training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- (4) The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both natural and physical as equipment for the individual to live in soundness and contribute to the development of his society. (Section 1 sub - section 5 of NPE, 1981).

This is part of the vision and mission of social studies education in the 21st century. Not only is education the greatest fence that can be used to bring about redress in our national life, it is also the greatest investment the nation can make for the quick development of its economic, social, political, sociological, psychological potentialities. Social studies education is fundamentally a catalyst in this wholistic national development engineering. Hence, it must be taught at all levels of our education system. This is the vision and mission of social studies.

For long, the context of education in Nigeria has been shallow and alien. It is neo-colonial in character, which has thrown the Nigerian child outside his African value system, and therefore put him out of tune with the cultural and environmental aspiration of the Nigerian society. The vision and mission of social studies is to correct these and focus the child's attention on our African societal values.

Social studies is a problem solving discipline. Therefore, in the 21st century it is expected that the influence of social studies education will reduce to the lowest vices and crimes in the society.

In addition, the vision and mission of social studies education in the 21st century is to produce citizens who can tolerate the ambiguities of changing situations in a global village environment, produce citizens who are well equipped with the skills, values and attitudes for critical thinking, creativity, analytical inquiry, observation and psycho-motor skills which are essential ingredients for problem solving and survival in an ever increasing complex world.

Also, the vision and mission of social studies in the 21st century is to create an enabling environment geared towards the maintenance of fundamental values of democracy, respect for the dignity and worth of man, respect for human rights, respect for dignity of labour, tolerance and religious harmony.

Finally, social studies education in the 21st century should lay more emphasis on citizenship education, patriotism, societal values, awareness and national consciousness. This will encourage and actualize the peace and harmony that the society longs for.

Conclusion

Nigeria was a victim of colonialism and today, she is a victim of neo-colonialism. She lacks the basic structures for the practice of liberal democracy because of the long years of military dictatorship characterized by open disregard for basic human rights, killings, looting of public treasury, armed robbery, corruption and other vices. Social Studies in the 21st century will tackle these headlong to give our society the long lasting peace, harmony and prosperity which we need very urgently.

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