

# DEVELOPING NIGERIAN YOUTHS THROUGH SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to identify the roles of social studies education in youth development. The paper begins by clarifying some basic concepts and took a brief look at the situation of youths in Nigeria. It went further to give some reasons for the development of the Nigerian youth through social studies education and those who should be responsible for this in social studies education. How this can be done was also emphasized. It also enumerated the problems that are likely to hinder the development of the youth through social studies education. It concludes by iterating the importance of social studies education in achieving the much talked about youth development in Nigeria at the same time gives recommendations.

## **Introduction**

Youths are one of the greatest assets any nation has not only are they legitimately regarded as the future leaders, they are potentially and actually the greatest investment for a country's development. They serve as good measure of the extent to which a country can reproduce and sustain itself. The extent of their vitality, responsible conduct and roles in the society is positively correlated with development of their country. It is universally held that youths are seen as the vehicle through which positive changes can be realized. This is why no nation in the world plays with the future development of its youth. Government, parents, guardians etc. devote a lot of time and resources in order to explore and harness the potentialities of the youth.

The above points are not farfetched from the justification of the introduction of social studies education in Nigeria, whose idea came up after the civil war when the state of social development can no longer cope with the level of indiscipline. Social problems plagued the nation and indiscipline among adults and youths became glaring. To minimize this and to socialize the coming generation in a way to build a strong, united and disciplined Nigeria, the type of education that has man or the child at its centre and teaches him about the society become orientables so as to achieve the goals of making well informed and useful citizens in own society.

## **Conceptual Clarifications**

For clearer understanding, it is important that certain concepts in this write up be properly understood. And such concepts are

- **Youth:** According to Aibangbe (2006) the way in which a nation defines youth is related to the objectives conditions and realities that exist on the ground. That is why nations use different parameters and variables in defining their youths. In Nigeria the youths comprises all young persons of ages 18 to 30 and who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This category represents the most active, volatile and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population socio-economically, emotionally and otherwise. The youths can also be referred to as the younger generation in any society that are in the period of adolescences and one below the age of 40 years. They are full of energy, exuberance and curiosity about life and the environment they find themselves. These attributes makes them at that stage to be very vulnerable to social ills and vices, because it is a period of uncertainty, doubts and exploration and even a period of self exploration and identification.

- **Youth development:-** Youth development has been defined in many ways by different scholars however, Ejeh (2006) define youth development as a conscious effort to coordinate support, positive activities that promote the social, emotional, physical, cultural, moral and academic well-being of the youth. It is a process that involves the states, communities, families, socio-religious, organizations and the private sectors in determining efforts to improve the quality of the youths. Some of the strategies of developing the youth especially in Nigeria are done economically in youth programmes in provision of youth infrastructure, skill centres and cultural exchange programme. But for this purpose our attention is on education with special focus on social studies education.
- **Social studies education:-** Social studies is a study of problem of survival in an environment and also find solutions to them. It is an integrated study that critically looks at man and his complex relationship with his socio-physical environment. Dubey et al (1980) sees social studies as a subject that studies man and his activities in relations to his social, economic, political, culture and physical environment. It entails the training and orientation of individuals towards the acquisition and utilization of social skills, knowledge and values in order to become functional and effective members of the society from all these definitions given one can basically see that the basic goals of social studies education is to prepare young people to be more humane, rational, responsive and responsible participating citizen in the development of our society.

### **Objectives of Social Studies Education**

Dubey, et al (1980) identified the following as the objectives of social studies education.

- i. The development of good citizenship, the upliftment of moral character and the promotion of social understanding in the society.
- ii. The promotion of national unity and economic development
- iii. Preparing pupils/students for the world of work and understanding of every day problems that they may face as adults
- iv. The development of critical thinking, problem-solving and decision making for the survival and the progress of the nation.
- v. Enhancing socialization and acculturation of citizens in the society.

### **Situation of Nigeria Youths**

The most common vices among Nigerian youths are street roaming in search of non existent jobs, alms begging particularly in cities and urban areas, prostitutions, crimes such as smoking, drug addition and immorality, all in a bid to survive. Another problem that should not be overlooked in the lives of Nigerian youths is parental ineffectiveness in the education and moral upbringing of their youths as a result of unfavourable economic environment caused by poverty. Furthermore, there is lack of proper career guidance in that youth do not often know what kind of career to choose, these is also illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, health hazard and moral decadence among the youths in Nigeria today and if urgent steps are not taken it could lead to the total collapse of the development of the youths particular and the nation at large.

### **Reasons for the Development of the Nigerian Youth through Social Studies Education**

The importance of social studies education as an antidote and a tool for developing the Nigerian youth can be seen in its value as stated by Ogundele (1978).

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- a. It is a discipline that enables man to know his environment, both immediate and distant and how best he can make use of it. As a subject it deals with the totality of man.
- b. The study of this subject makes it easier for an individual to adjust and live happily in any community in which he found himself.
- c. It prepares students to become functional citizens within a democratic society through the acquisition of relevant information and the use of the process of inquiry to discover for themselves
- d. It provides students with a series of positive experiences to help them develop skills to solve problems in a national manner.
- e. It encourages the awareness of the world, so that students are more conscious of people outside their environment and able to draw distinctions between conditions in different habitat.
- f. It encourages positive attitudes like honesty, respect, love etc towards other member of the society.
- g. It has the potential to acquaint students with a multi-disciplinary or integrated approach of learning.

Having seen the values of social studies education, it is quite clear that for any youth to be meaningful to himself and the society he needs to develop those values portrayed by social studies education in order to be functionality well adjusted to any environment he finds himself. The increasing rate of high level of unemployment in Nigeria is not only because the jobs are not available but that our youths do not have the positive attitudes and values, knowledge and skills that will enable them link up these jobs available. Social studies education seems to be a panacea in that direction.

### **The Role of Social Studies Education in Youth Development**

One of the major aims of teaching social studies education in our schools and college is to help develop certain features in each student to enable him become a mature and worthwhile citizen in a democratic Nigerian society these features portrayed by social studies education can be in the following according to Ogundele (1978).

- Encouragement of positive attitudes and these include open-mindedness, concern for others, respect for individuals and property, honesty and civic responsibility, cooperation and love of learning.
- Encouragement of skills which include, the ability to solve problems and think critically, being creative and ability to communicate ideas, thoughts effectively.
- Encouragement of values to be developed by youths such as morals, aesthetic and spiritual, the pursuit of happiness for all, an appreciation of democratic principles and the desire to conserve ones nation.
- Relating to community life by providing opportunities for discussing current affairs on issues of concern to the community and providing ways of looking for solution to such problems as crime, corruption, smuggling, robbery, cheating, embezzlement etc. which has bedeviled our youths in our society.

In short our youths need to be given the necessary information for enlightenment, to be taught to have respect for law and order, to appreciate the need to honestly and diligently, to respect their culture and the culture of other societies and to appreciate values and advantages of cooperation in their community and be effective and efficient citizen, its no wonder social studies education is given a prominent place in our National Policy on Education.

### **Who Should Develop Nigerian Youths in Social Studies Education**

Social studies education has so much to offer to the Nigeria youths but this cannot be made possible without the efficient, effective and qualitative social studies teachers. Social studies teachers should develop Nigerian youths because they:

- a. Have a very wide range of knowledge to absorb and convey to others. They know where to go for the services of the facts and information relevant to their field of knowledge such as resource materials places or resources persons. They are aware of the importance of up-to-date information and possess the talents of researcher. They know about world affairs, national affairs, local affairs and are able to show how they are related to each other.
- b. Take time to attend workshops and seminars where lectures, debates pamphlets and bulletins are prepared specially for them.
- c. Seek to understand their students needs and interests, the way they think and the teaching aids and methods best suited for them
- d. Have the ability to appeal to their student's imagination to arouse their interest and enthusiasm by meaning teaching through the use of carefully chosen visual aids.
- e. Evaluate the work of their students in order to know whether their lesson is a success or failure or whether the students are progressing or not.
- f. Identifying problems facing teaching and leaving in social studies education and proffer meaningful and practical solutions to them.
- g. Are deeply interested in their work and not just looking for money.

Social studies educators are not of the factors to reckon within the development of youths in Nigeria.

### **How Should Nigerian Youths Develop through Social Studies Education**

For Nigerian youth to be developed through social studies education, they should be taught to be useful to the society and to appreciate their culture in order to be acceptable by the society.

Social studies as a citizenship education will enable them participate in the day-to-day activities of the community as well as expose them to their civic responsibilities of the nation at large.

The school communities within the community through the study of social studies education will pave way for the understanding of the society and thereby helps the youth to accept the norms and traditions of the society and consequently obey the law an order of the society.

Through social studies as citizenship education the youths are helped to solve a lot of social problems and such societal problems are lack of patriotism, absenteeism, dishonesty and fraud in that the youth will be made to be aware of their civic responsibilities in order to be patriotic and educate others to participate in the political activities of the nation positively.

Social studies teaches self awareness in pupils and inculcates self discipline self reliance, selfless service which in turn develop a sound mind in a sound body capable of dealing with the stresses and strains of life. It develops national consciousness and international cooperation in the youths.

Social studies education prepares the youths to adjust to the work environment in terms of how their skills will be utilized, how they will be expected to relate to their co-workers, superiors and others, their appearance decorum, speech among others.

For Nigerian youths to be developed through social studies education, they should be taught to live with the components of the programmes goals/objectives as outlines in the 2004 National Policy on Education. This will ensure the actualization of the objectives in the youth and the nation.

However, it should be noted that social studies has some problems that are hindering its learning in schools and higher institutions.

### **Problems Hindering the Development of the Youths of Nigeria through Social Studies Education.**

Social studies education is relatively a new subject and has been confronting many problems and some of such problems are as follows:

- a. **Uncertainty of the future prospect of the subject.** This is as a result of its newness and because it is not studied to school certificate level and in higher institution students have been discouraged about its study in that not many higher institutions in Nigeria offers it in their school curricular.
- b. **Lack of specialists in social studies education.** This is so because many teachers of the subject have ever been trained in social studies may be because of its newness. Many of them study history, geography and other social science subjects and would only treat the aspects relating to their area of specialization.
- c. **Inadequacy of time allocated to its study on the school time table:** it is a subject that needs much time but less attention is given to it. Plenty of time is needed when playing roles or in dramatization and its study cannot be effective indoors as there must be time for excursions and visits to familiarize students with the society in which they live and their cultural heritage.
- d. **Lack of seminars and workshops:** Teachers in prior any schools are deprived of opportunity of attending seminars and workshops which would broaden their knowledge of the subject. But these have only been encouraged in post primary institutions and have made teaching of the subject effective in post primary school only.
- e. **Laziness of some teachers in meeting the demand of the subject:** Most teachers find it difficult to sit down to equip themselves with necessary details of the lesson like consulting necessary textbooks to collect facts needed for the lesson. Their lesson notes are not well written. They also fail to adopt suitable methods in putting the lesson across to the pupils.
- f. **Parental and societal:** The unfavorable parental and societal attitude militates against the choice of social studies education in higher institutions. They usually have wrong impression that the course is for the “never do wells”, the drop outs and those who cannot get admission in other discipline. Parents prefer their children to read courses like medicine, law, etc. there is also lack of public awareness of job opportunities accruing to social studies education graduate among others as militating against the choice of social studies education as a career.

Other problems include lack of textbooks to supplement teacher’s efforts, lack of teaching aids due to lack of funds available to schools.

For social studies education to meet the goals and objectives of citizenship education stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) and to be used as an effective tool for youth development in Nigeria these problems among others should be attended to seriously and immediately too and hence the following recommendations.

### **Recommendation**

- The government should pay serious attention to the use of instructional facilities by providing moderns, adequate and viable workshops, textbooks.

- Social studies must be introduced in secondary schools up to school certificate level and in virtually all the higher institutions in Nigeria; it should be made as one of the General Studies Courses.
- Sufficient time must be allocated to the teaching of the subject in schools especially for outdoor visits and excursions.
- Seminars and workshops organization for post primary schools should be introduced to primary schools teachers so that untrained teachers and those who have not been acquainted with the study of the subject in their various schools will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the subject.
- The attitude of teachers towards the subject must change, they must prepare their lesson note explicitly, consult textbooks, improvise teaching aids and work very hard to ignite the interest of the students.
- Experts must be encouraged to write good textbooks for consultations and preparing of lesson notes by teachers.
- There should be public enlightenment by stakeholders in the educational sectors to enable parents to understanding the importance of social studies education for the development of youth in Nigeria especially in this present dispensation.

### **Conclusion**

Developing Nigerian youths through social studies education is one of the major ways of rescuing them from their predicament. Social studies education is emphasized as an effective ways of developing the youth because it has the capabilities for self reliance through job creation, self development, and curbing of social voices common in today's youths, this is able to do through the teaching of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain.

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