

ACTUALIZING NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT VIA THE TEACHING OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study is on the actualization of national development via the teaching of Social Studies Education in primary schools. The paper pointed out that, the best instrument for national development is the primary school pupils, if they are trained early for this purpose, they would not depart from it. The paper examined the relationship between the National Policy on Primary Education and the objectives of Social Studies Education for primary schools. It also discussed on the role Social Studies Education should play inculcating the spirit of national development into the pupils, in Recommendations were also advanced. It thus concluded that Social Studies as a subject is the "key that can 'unlock' the tender hearts of the pupils and plant in the 'tools' for national development

Introduction

This paper's focus is on the actualization of national development through the teaching of Social Studies in Nigeria's primary schools. To fully comprehend this subject matter, it is imperative to define the concept of development, which would influence the understanding of this topic.

According to Onyemelukwe (1977), "development involves a society's transformation-through its institutions, organization, social rules, customary usage and attitudes to an extent that makes the society more and more positively responsive to desire modern changes". The implication if this definition of development, is that, development involves transformation and that the transformations are dependent upon the society's institutional make-up as well as its social, cultural and attitudinal set-up..

Ikwumelu (1989) stated that "development can be viewed as a multidimensional process involving the reduction or eradication of inequality, absolute poverty, unemployment and slavery or apartheid, as well as institutional changes and economic growth".

Arnolds (1986) though agreed with the aforementioned definitions of development, but added "development also resides in the more intangible aspects of national behaviour. These include the way the political system is operated, the manner in which the social or ethnic group works together and fit into the state structure. He also stated that too much emphasis is placed upon economic growth and the statistics of per capita income, because these are easy to measure. According to him, development is also about what is loosely described as the quality of life".

From all the definitions of development discussed, we can infer that the meaning of development as a concept has gone beyond the narrow perspective of economics or any single field of knowledge. Instead its understanding can only be possible via all aspects of man and his environment. Thus national development is that transformation, growth and progress of physical, political, social, economic and cultural aspects of a nation.

Every individual, community, society, nation and the world at large desires development. One of the major approaches to development is through education, which has to do with the inculcation of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, with the major aim of transforming the individual, who in turn becomes an instrument of development to himself, family, community, nation and the world. Teachers play the greatest role in the process of transforming the child who would

eventually transform the nation. To support this statement, Dr. Julius Nyerere popularly called "Mwalimu stated that "it is the teachers more than any other single group of people who determine the attitudes of society and shape the ideas and aspirations of the nation".

The educational curriculum of a nation is made up of the experiences offered to the teacher under the guidance of the school. Thus the curriculum is implemented at all levels of our educational institutions under various disciplines, such as English, mathematics, economics, chemistry, physics, biology, history, geography and social studies curriculum. Every discipline has its own contribution to make towards

national development. But in this write up we are examining the impact of social studies education on the primary school pupils towards national development. Before we consider such relationship, we must define primary education and also enumerate its objectives for the nations.

Primary Education and Objectives

According to the National Policy on Education (1981) primary education is referred to as an education given in an institution for children aged normally 6 to 11. Since the rest of the educational system is built upon it, the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system.

Its general objectives are as follows:

- (a) The inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively;
- (b) The laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- (c) Citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
- (d) Character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes;
- (e) Developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment;
- (f) Giving the child the opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capability;
- (g) Providing basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

These objectives form the basis for primary education in all the states of the federation. Looking at these objectives critically, we would deduce that their achievement depends on the role of various disciplines; Social Studies inclusive Primary Education is the key to the success or failure of the whole system of education for national development. At this age (i.e. 6 to 11) pupils¹ minds are young and tender, and provide fertile ground for absorbing all that are taught to them in schools. Primary education is the right stage for laying the foundation of national development.

The Bible, the word of God instructed in the book of Proverbs 22:6 that: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it".

If we, as a nation desire national development, then we should obey God's instruction on training, and begin to train our children to develop nationally from the primary schools, when they become adult they will continue in this training of developing the nation.

As earlier stated, Social Studies is a discipline that can impart the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary for national development in students, starting from the primary school. Therefore it is essential to acquaint ourselves with the meaning of this subject, its objectives especially for primary education and its role in national development.

Social Studies Education and Its Objectives for Primary Education in Nigeria

Social studies according to Obemeata, Ogugua, Agu & Laosebikan (1981) stated that Social Studies "is a study of how man influences and is in turn influenced by his physical, political, religious, economic, psychological, cultural, scientific and technological environments". Mansaray (1984) described Social Studies as " the study of the interrelations between man and his physical and social environments, the problems and issues posed by these interactions and the ways by which man seeks solutions and classifications to them ... Social Studies is an attempt to study the totality of man's existence on earth".

Though there are other definitions of Social Studies, these two aforementioned definitions will do for our understanding of the discipline. From the foregoing definitions, we can describe the subject as one that is concerned primarily with the study of people, their environment, the society in which they live, the aspects of man's problems and thereby help to seek solutions to them. Social Studies, is a distinct field of study that can bring transformation to any nation in all aspects of life.

The United States of America (USA), which is regarded as a developed country and the 21st Century World Power, could not have achieved this status without the help of Social > Studies Education. If USA, a nation of various races, can have a national outlook and transform their nation in all aspects of development, Nigeria, with her multi ethnic and religious characteristics, can equally achieve national development, by being committed and dedicated to this course, i

The objectives of Social Studies for primary school are as follows:

- (a) Developing the right citizenship as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
- (b) Inculcating character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes;
- (c) Developing in the child that ability to adapt to his changing environment;
- (d) The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical;
- (e) Developing in the child the sense of appreciating the dignity of man and liberty;
- (f) Developing the sense of sympathy and compassion for the less fortunate member of the society;
- (g) Developing the sense of respect and tolerance of the opinion of others even in disagreement.

Having enumerated the national objectives for primary education in Nigeria and the objectives of Social Studies for primary schools, we would examine the relationship between both objectives and point out their working relationship for national development.

The Relationship Between the National Objectives for Primary Education and Social Studies Objectives for Primary Education

- (i) Objective (c) of the national policy on primary education and objective (a) of Social Studies for primary education are similar, because both are on the development of the right citizenship, which is the basis for effective participation in the contribution to the society. Citizenship education is an integral aspects of Social Studies Education.
- (ii) Objective (d) of the national policy on primary education and objective (b) of Social Studies for primary education are both on the inculcation of character, moral training and the development of sound attitudes. One of the ultimate goals of Social Studies education is the development of desirable socio-civic and personal behaviours. Except the members of a society manifest desirable behaviour development cannot be adequately attained.
- (iii) Objective (e) of the national policy on primary education and objective (c) of Social Studies for primary education are both on developing in the child that ability to adapt to his changing environment. The child should know that his environment can change at any time. Therefore he should be taught to adapt to such changes.
- (iv) Objective (f) of the national policy on primary school education and objective (d) of Social Studies for primary education are both, giving the child opportunities for developing skills that will enable him to function effectively in society. Social Studies Education, offers a useful avenue for inculcating social, physical and intellectual skills in its learners (Osakwe and Itejere, 1993).

Having examined both objectives, we can note that, four of the objectives are similar, as a result Social Studies have a role to play in achieving the objectives of primary education for national development.

The Role of Social Studies Education in Primary Schools for National Development

Social Studies Education is to inculcate the right citizenship, character, moral training and the development of sound attitudes, adaptation to different environment and inculcation appropriate skills into the learner,

To start with the inculcation of the right citizenship is the basic ingredient for national development, the social studies teacher is expected to drum it into the ears of the pupils that they are first of all, Nigerian citizens. The pupils should be taught in a manner that would down play ethnic .or < sectional citizenship. They would thus grow to be patriotic in nature. Having a national outlook and ready to contribute to the nation's development physically, socially, economically, politically and culturally.

Topics like the national symbols, which include the national, flag, the coat of arms, the national anthem and the national pledge, would inculcate national consciousness into the pupils; These symbols would be taught so effectively that, when the pupils see the national flag, they would remember for example, that the green colour stands for agriculture and the white for peace. Therefore pupils should be encouraged to practice agriculture and peaceful co-existence from these tender years, They should also be taught the civic obligations and rights of citizens from this level. The teacher can assist them in observing

the simple classroom obligations. This training would be transferred to the nation in their later years.

The social studies teacher should be very keen in observing the character of the pupils. Good behaviour should be rewarded while bad ones should be punished. Methodologies that would assist in moulding character and attitudes should be employed by the teacher. "Education without character and sound attitudes is just like "sugar without tea". The teacher should recognize the common types of misbehaviour and try to transform the lives of the pupils.

Such abnormal behaviour could be caused by the following: surplus energy, -physical discomfort, poor curriculum and methods, desire to be noticed, frustrations or personality disturbances etc. The teacher should diagnose these problems and apply corrective measures. Virtues like honesty, hardwork, kindness, cooperation, humility, patience should be noticed, encouraged and rewarded. This type of training prepares the pupils for national development.

The teacher should teach the pupils to understand that life is dynamic. He should give enough illustrations to prove this fact. Pupils will continue to change their environment as long as they live. Therefore they should learn to adapt to any environment. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation. Thus if pupils are taught about environmental adaptability, it would prepare them to live peacefully and comfortably in any part of the county in future, at the same time contributing to the development of such area.

Social Studies also inculcates the essential skills for self, family, community and national development. This is confirmed by Jarollimek (1977) when he stated that: "Social Studies Education have something to do with development of civic and citizenship, knowledge, attitudes, values and skills". Balyejusa (1981) also stated that, Social Studies is not so much concerned with theory building, rather it interrelates or integrates the already formulated theories in order to gain an understanding and wider perspective in the study of man and how he solves his societal and environmental problems. One of the major goals of Social Studies Education is to solve society's problems. Thus, the Social Studies teacher, can use some teaching methods, especially the inquiry method to expose pupils to problems, and how to solve them. This training would prepare them for problem solving in future. National development cannot be achieved without problems. The early exposure of pupils to problem solving would eventually help them in national development.

Recommendations

The recommendations that would assist in the actualization of national development in primary school pupils are as follows:

- (i) Only teachers, who are specialists in Social Studies, should be employed to teach the subject.
- (ii) Government and school management should permit and assist Social Studies teachers to develop themselves,
- (iii) Social Studies teachers must use resource materials that would enhance the teaching-learning process.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the actualization of national development via the teaching of Social Studies Education in Primary Schools. As indicated earlier, the young ones are the best instruments for national development. It can be achieved if they are well trained in all subjects, social studies inclusive, such training would not depart from them and the knowledge, skills, values and attitude acquired would be used for national development. Social Studies is the only subject that can effectively inculcate into the pupils, the desirable values ideas, beliefs and attitudes which would enable pupils develop the nation. Because it is a subject that trains the 'head' and the 'heart' Obemeata Ogugua, Agu & Laosebikan (1981) described Social Studies as a "key to unlock" the tender hearts of the pupils and plant 'tools' which would be used for national development in later years.

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