

SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AS ANSWER TO INTEGRATED NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper x-rayed some bold steps taken by Nigeria towards development, however, the Socio-politico-economic realities portrayed her as a nation plagued in developmental fantasies, the author posits that Social Studies education which is laced with rich curricular content can provide the needed developmental transformation, if effectively taught in Nigerian schools.

A nation's height of development is hinged on arrays of indicators. These indicators include health, education, nutrition, and employment opportunities. Nigeria is a developing country striving hard to join the country of developed nations. Nonetheless, irrespective of the seeming efforts to ginger social, political, economic, scientific, and technological development in Nigeria, the slant of Nigeria's developmental efforts, or rather the practical realities of our situation present Nigeria as a country whose developmental problems have defied not only an articulate answer, intellectual or academic theorizing and pontifications, but also as a nation predominantly wallowing in developmental fantasies (Mezieobi, 2010). Anchored on the premise that Nigeria's road to be among the comity of developed nations is hindered by Nigerians themselves who lack positive values and moral attitudes germane to effective integrated national development, this paper stresses that the place of Social Studies education in Nigeria is to produce qualitative Nigerians laced with the right type of values, attitudes and skills essential for integrated national development.

The Concepts: “Social Studies” “Development” and Integrated National Development

Social Studies has been defined severally by legion of scholars, writers, commissions, experts and non-experts in the field of Social Studies, based on their perception, beliefs, specialization and prism. For academic panorama, Dubey and Barth (1980), sees Social Studies as the process of education which utilizes the study of human life for the purpose of giving children the opportunity to practice solving problem of crucial importance both for individual and the society. Okobiah, (1984),

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Ogundare (1987) and Ogundele (1987) affirm that Social Studies is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of man in group interrelationship aimed at producing good citizens with the needed skills, competencies and values to effectively live, interact and contribute positively to our ever changing World. Asiwaju, 1990: 1 aptly indicate that Social Studies have some very close relationship with the Social Sciences. Mezieobi (1992) averred that Social Studies in Nigeria is visualized as a formalized, correlated or integrated study of man and his environment, which involves the learner with the cognitive skills, values, attitudes, abilities and competencies that will enable him become an informed rational, analytical, participating and functional citizen in his environment and beyond. Iyamu and Edozie (2006), emphasized that Social Studies is a dynamic, systematic and integrated discipline for generating knowledge, attitude and skills necessary for dealing with contemporary life issue. Lastly, Social Studies is visualized as:

An integrated field of study that attempts to study man in-dept within the ramification of his dynamic environment, as well as equipping him with positive knowledge, attitudes, values and adaptive interactive skills for the purpose of producing a socio-civically effective citizenry who can contribute positively to the good of the society (Odogbor, 2010).

Development is a multi-dimensional concept which connote qualitative and quantitative improvement in every aspect of human life, Seers (1972) pleaded for a definition of development based on human well-being. He asked:

Why do we confuse development with economic growth?... Development means creating the condition for the realization of human personality. Its evaluation must therefore take into account three linked economic criteria: whether there has been a reduction in (i) Poverty (ii) Unemployment (iii) Inequality.

Among the other very important indices of development are availability or provision of “Social Capita” that is formal education, hospitals, housing, transportation, media, food and an appreciable magnitude of interrogation (Mezieobi, 2010). If any of these indices declines, there is no development even if the per capita income increased as in the case of many developing or third World countries like Nigeria.

Integrated national development refers to a multi-dimensional process of transformation of the overall social, cultural, political, economic, scientific and technological life of a country to a new level of dynamic synthesis through effective planning which ensures direct participation of the citizenry in decision making and execution. The economic dimension of national development includes: improved living standards of the citizens, aggressive industrialization and reliable transportation and communications networks. The Social facets of national development connotes high literacy rate, adequate housing, declining unemployment rate, improved social ethics, social justice, cultural perpetuation and adequate provision of social amenities and

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services. The political dimension of national development involves fashioning out acceptable patterns of political legitimacy which would enable the citizens not only to participate actively in the political process but also have access to the political decision point through effective representation (Pye and Verba, 1965; Ogunna, 1981).

National Development Efforts in Nigeria

The following are efforts geared towards national development in Nigeria:

(1) National Development Plan

Planning in Nigeria began in late 1945 at the end of the World War II, when the colonial masters in London instructed her colonies to prepare plans for their development, based on this the Ten-year Plan of development and Welfare, 1946, was promulgated. These plans were geared towards accelerated national development in all spheres of development, be it economic, political, social, cultural, scientific or technological.

(2) The Formulation of the National Policy on Education

The national Policy on Education (NPE), is a policy document of the National Curriculum Conference. This policy clearly stated the roles education is expected to play in national development. It started on the premise that ‘no policy on education can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and objectives of the nation’. The national policy on education has been revised severally, and the recent edition was in 2004.

(3) The Inclusion of three Major Nigerian Languages into the School Curriculum

Nigeria is a heterogeneous country with over 250 ethnic groups, each having different language. To avoid a compendium of languages into the school curriculum, three main Nigerian languages, Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo have been introduced into the school curricula and each student is expected to learn the language outside his/her mother tongue. These are put in place to ensure national development.

(4) The Introduction of Unity Schools

The introduction and location of unity schools in all the states of the federation is another step towards national development, with this scenario, students from all walks of life have ample opportunity of mixing together.

(5) The Introduction of National Youth Service Corps (N.Y.S.C)

The National Youth Service Scheme which started in Nigeria in 1973 is a right step aimed at national development. The purpose of the scheme is to foster unity, patriotism, national awareness, spirit of service to our fatherland etc. Currently plans are underway to give the scheme security backing, and their allowances have been increased recently by the federal government.

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(6) Creation of States and Local Governments

The creation of states and local governments in Nigeria since 1967 to 1996 is aimed at giving Nigerians grass root development and by extension; it will lead to national development.

(7) Federal Character

The Introduction of federal character into the Nigerian polity, which is aimed at ensuring that every state of the federation gets a fair share in terms of the national cake, is a veritable roadmap towards national development.

(8) Framing of the Nigerian Constitution

A constitution is a written document, which creates the organs of government and allocates duties to those who carry out the functions of government in a country. The framing and regular review of the Nigerian's constitution is aimed at national development because it provides base for Social control and Social action within acceptable norms of the land.

(9) The Indigenization Policy

After the promulgation of the Enterprises Promotions Decree in 1973, many industries in Nigeria became indigenized for the purpose of making Nigerians to have a say in the nation's economic growth and development, this effort is tailored towards national development.

(10) The Setting up of Ethical Revolution: War Against Indiscipline (WAI)

War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC), Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Federal Road Maintenance Agency (FERMA), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Orientation Agency (NOA), National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF), Education Trust Fund (ETF), Industrial Trust Fund (ITF), Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Economic and Financial Crimes commission (EFCC), etc are all geared towards national development.

(11) Also, the power generation efforts in Nigeria, the establishment of skill acquisition centres all over the country, the electoral reforms, Bank consolidation exercise, the Amnesty programme, the Sovereign Wealth Fund, Banking reforms, Freedom of Information Bill (FOIB), Public Information Bill (PIB), etc. are all targeted towards national development.

Hindrances to National Development in Nigeria

In spite of the fore-stated national development efforts in Nigeria, the Nigerian nation is still lagging behind in development fantasies. The following will add credence to this claim, as posited by Mezieobi, 2010.

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- (1) Engrained Ethnic consciousness or chauvinism and prejudice with its associated parochialism, primordial ties, ethnocentrism, egocentrism, mutual distrust suspicions and mediocrity in high places.
- (2) Religious Intolerance.
- (3) Discriminatory Policies Perpetuated by Government.
- (4) The Minority Question
- (5) Corruption
- (6) Poor Leadership
- (7) Yawning Educational Deficiencies.
- (8) Very High Illiteracy Rate.
- (9) Galloping Population Trends
- (10) Inflation
- (11) Declining Agricultural Productivity resulting in poor diet, hunger and starvation.
- (12) Escalating Political Instability.
- (13) Over-dependence on Foreign Technological Emancipation and Foreign Aid for Development.
- (14) Scandalous Provision of social amenities such as unreliable transportation and communication systems occasioning Nigeria's weak economic infrastructure.
- (15) Inadequate Housing and Health facilities and Inadequate Provision of Water and Energy.

Other hindrances to national development in Nigeria are the activities of militants, Boko Haram, hostage taking, kidnapping, rising unemployment, poor power supply and high infrastructural decay. To add to the list of the hindrances to national development in Nigeria, Ajayi and Nwozor (1989:82) have this to say: ...Nigeria...is still infested with high level of indiscipline...drug addiction, hard drug pushing, stealing, rioting, poor work ethics, lateness to work, non-commitment to one's job, political victimization...oppression, injustice, cruelty, tribalism, impatience...wrong social values...avarice, and selfishness...political intolerance...no sense of common purpose, national citizenship and loyalty to the extent that people still place the interest of their own town, tribe or kinsmen above that of the Nation (Nigeria)...Nigeria is still a producer of primary products and consumer of finished goods from developed Worlds, her minerals are not sufficiently tapped by her citizens because of shortage of capital or as a result of primitive method of processing.

The paucity of development in Nigeria is caused mainly by politicians who have persistently mismanaged the country's wealth and made laws to suit their personal interest, instead of the interest of the entire nation. For example, the leadership of the lower house of assembly in Nigeria is currently being quizzed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) over fraud of about 40billion naira, this type of scenario and many more yet to be discovered impede development. Nigerians have what may be called the development standstill gene-a-hereditary trait resistant to progressive national development (Mezieobi, 2010).

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The Contribution of Social Studies to National Development

The Contribution of Social Studies to national development can be summed up thus:

(a) Citizenship ideals, norms, values which are essential ingredients for national development are inculcated through the effective teaching of Social Studies. It is only effective and productive citizens, who are products of Social Studies education, who would in the predominant climate of selfish and in the midst of Nigerians made hunt for materialism, contemplate to contribute to national development (Mezieobi, 2010). Other values and attitudes for national development which Social Studies education inculcates in the learners include discipline, patriotism and nationalism, friendship, tolerance, hard work, fairness, loyalty, dedication, trust, comradeship, kindness, sympathy, industry etc.

(b) One of the leading goals of Social Studies is that it leads to learner's self-enhancement. The ultimate focus of this goal of Social Studies is to equip the children with the psychological know-how to enable them feel committed to their society, feel a sense of being worthy members of the society who are bound to contribute to, societal development (Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi, 2008).

(c) The content of Social Studies is boundless and thus it prepares the learners for robust lives in this dynamic and globalized World. This kind of preparation falls in line with Law (2004) dispositive curriculum that the global requirements for education in recent times include promotion life-long education, re-emphasizing the quality of learners' experiences, reorganizing subjects into key learning areas so as to develop broad knowledge base, and developing in learners the ability to think critically and be innovative. This kind of education affords the products of the system the ability to contribute meaningfully to the rapid development of the country.

(d) Social Studies education, more than any other school subject emphasizes the teaching of skills. Okobia, 1984:96, lends credence to this when he averred that "...as far as Social Studies...(is) concerned...skills become important as far as they help in facilitating the development of ...values" values are very essential for national development.

(e) The methods employed in teaching Social Studies equip the learners with reflective thinking skills which will enable them question the "what" "how" and "why" of things in the society. This has implications for finding answers to Nigeria's development problems or to accelerating the pace of development through national decision-making (Mezieobi, 2010).

(f) Social Studies provides training for youths in inquiry, critical thinking, problem solving, decision making skills, and rational Social actions which are vital for survival and development of the individual in the society (Ukadike, 2010). This will lead to national unity and by extension, national development.

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(g) The prime concern of Social Studies education in Nigeria is the production of effective citizenship. Barr, Barth and Shermis (1978) sees Social Studies as acquiring citizenship education, and the promotion of good citizenship is the goal of any country in order to promote national integration and development.

(h) In sum, Social Studies teaching will help in the achievement of our laudable goal of building a strong, united, viable and prosperous nation as enunciated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004).

Conclusion

Nigeria is a developing country, striving towards the status of a developed nation. The rich curriculum content of Social Studies, if well taught in schools, will place Nigeria on the map of developed nations of the World.

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