

SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By

EMMANUEL N. NWALADO

*Department of Primary Education,
Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba,
Delta State.*

And

NGOZI C. OKONKWO

*Department of Primary Education,
Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba,
Delta State.*

Abstract

The purpose of education in most countries of the world is the development of individuals who would participate effectively in national development. Social studies was introduced into the Nigerian school system decades ago with the goal of breaking down regional and ethnic loyalties, and fostering national unity and development. This paper examined how Social Studies contents could be utilised to give learners all round development with a view to making meaningful contributions to the development of the country. Social Studies and national development and the role of Social Studies teachers towards national development were critically examined. The paper concluded that the young ones are the best instrument for national development. It can be achieved if they are well trained in all subjects, social studies inclusive. If critically done such training will not depart from them. To this end, the paper recommended inter alia that Nigerian schools need to promote the right type of attitude and values in their curricular; the teaching of social studies should be handled by experts knowledgeable in the unique methods, techniques and strategies required for effective and efficient implementation of Social studies curricular in Nigerian Schools.

Keywords: Social Studies, Education, Tool, National Development.

There is a general consensus that Social Studies Education is about the grooming of good citizens. The objective is to reposition the young people so that they possess the knowledge, skills and values necessary for active participation in societal activities. Important to Social Studies Education are the efforts that are geared towards bringing new meaning to citizenship participation in community and national development.

One of the five National objectives constantly kept in view is that, Nigeria's education system should be able to assist her to become a "united, strong and self-reliant nation". (FRN, 2013). To attain self-reliant status is a worthwhile goal but its pursuit and attainment requires dedication, determination, perseverance and honesty of purpose by all concerned as well as disciplined citizens. This is where Social Studies education comes in.

Okobiah (2014), noted that Social Studies by understanding human relationships aims at producing citizens with skills, competences, moral values, and reasoned judgment to effectively live, interact, inter relate and contribute positively to the economic, social, political and cultural development of the Nigerian society and the world in general.

In the views of Osakwe and Itedjere (2014), Social Studies is an inter-disciplinary study that examines people and how they interact with their environment. For Barr, Barth and Shermis in Nwalado and Okonkwo (2014), it is a study in which students acquire knowledge of citizenship and reflective inquiry. This view is in accordance with the view of Kisson (2017), who noted that Social Studies is a programme of study which a society uses to instil in students the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions it considers important, concerning the relationships human beings have with each other, their world and themselves. Thus, Social Studies is a discipline that promotes world citizenship.

Beard in Nwalado (2007), alluded that, Social Studies is the creation of rich and many sided personality equipped with practical knowledge and inspired by ideas so that they can make their way and fulfil their mission in a changing society which is part of a complex world. In support of this assertion, Awolowo opined that, "A man is knowledgeable and functional who knows something of many things in addition to knowing everything of something" (Okobiah, 2014).

Objectives of Social Studies Education

The objectives of Social Studies education are derived from the Nigerian National objectives. Hence, it is necessary to first identify these National objectives

before highlighting the objectives of Social Studies Education in Nigeria. The five main national objectives of Nigeria according to National Policy on Education (2013) are the building of:

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A united, strong and self-reliant nation
4. A great and dynamic economy
5. A land of bright and equal opportunities for all citizens

The educational system is expected to produce sound, effective and productive citizens with relevant knowledge, skills and character required for the achievement of the above stated nation objectives, if the overall philosophy of Nigeria must be achieved using education as a tool, the philosophy of Nigeria education should aim at achieving the following objectives:

- *The inculcation of National consciousness and national unity.*
- *The inculcation of right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.*
- *The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and*
- *The acquisition of the appropriate skill, abilities, and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.*

According to Osakwe and itedjere in Nwalodo and Okonkwo (2014) objectives of Social Studies Education in Nigeria may be condensed into three areas, which include:

1. Information learning:

This is the knowledge component of Social Studies. It includes the following objectives

- a. The creation of awareness and an understanding of our ever changing social and physical environment. For example, the physical, social and political metamorphosis of the Nigerian environment from 1960 to date.
- b. The need for efficient utilization and management of our vast natural and human resources.
- c. The need for educating our citizens of the basics social functions that characterize all societies, such as producing, transporting, distributing and consuming of goods and services, providing for education, recreating and government.
- d. It also involves a study of the nation, its people and culture, the settlement, growth, history and development of Nigeria.
- e. The study of the neighbourhood, community, local government, state, how people live and work there, how they meet their basic need of life, how they interact and depend on each other.
- f. An examination of the world of work and an orientation of various careers, basic human institutions, such as the family.

2. Attitudes and values learning:

Social Studies objectives in the areas of attitudes and values include following:

- a. Knowing the common values of our societies as enshrined in the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria and the National Policy on Education
- b. Ability to make decisions that involve choices between competing values.
- c. Developing of reasoned loyalty to our country by respecting the national pledge.
- d. Knowing the basic human right guaranteed to all citizens.
- e. Developing a sense of respect for the ideals, the heritages and institutions of Nigeria.
- f. Developing a feeling of kinship towards every human being no matter his race colour or creed.
- g. Developing a sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and inter dependence of all members of the local community, and of the wider national and international community.

3. Abilities and skills learning:

Under this sub-category, the following objectives fall within the ambit of Social Studies:

- a. **Social Skills:** the ability to live and work together, that is, the feeling of comradeship. It also involves discipline in public places, for example, taking turns and learning to be courteous, learning self-control, sharing ideas and experiences with others, including the spirit of self-confidence.
- b. **Study Skills and Work Habits:** The ability to locate and gather information from book, the library, and from a variety of other resources, the ability to write sound academic reports, ability to read materials and detect bias, ability to use maps and other pictorial representations.
- c. **Group Work Skills:** The ability to work with others, take roles, participate in group discussions etc.
- d. **Intellectual Skills:** to develop a capacity to learn to acquire skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing and of calculation but also the skills of observation, analysis and inference which are involved in scientific problem solving. The objectives of Social Studies may be summarized as socialization for increased social awareness, social sensitivity to socio-environment affairs, social harmony and coexistence, positive social values perpetuation, social responsibility, reflective social problem identification and resolution-oriented decision making, socio-civic competence, constructive social criticism, social participation, and social action and valuing, application of acquired functional knowledge and skills or abilities to social setting, all for better social living.

Social Studies Education for Positive National Development

Alberta (2000) posited that the acquisition of basic knowledge, skills and positive attitudes are basic ingredients needed by citizens to contribute meaningfully to the growth of a society leading to national development. According to Rodney (2009)

national development implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline responsibility and material well-being.

Seer (2014) asked some pertinent questions with regards to national development. The question he asked are:

1. What has been happening to poverty?
2. What has been happening to unemployment?
3. What has been happening to inequality?

These questions were the consequences of the present state of development in most nations of the world. A nation that is tending towards growth and development must lay emphasis on a reorientation and reorganization of institutions and a transformation of the people's welfare.

Other questions germane to national development may include:

1. What gave rise to high profile corruption in the society
2. Why the high rate of insecurity?
3. Why such intimidating injustice in the society?
4. Why are corrupt public officials not properly prosecuted?

A decline from high to low of the questions above, no doubt, is a positive indication of development for a country.

Akinlaye, (2013) notes that if youths are properly prepared for civic competence and presented with conceptualized identity and consciousness for the future, no doubt, national development would be enhanced.

The Role of Social Studies towards National Development

Social studies help in preparing the learner for living effectively now and in the foreseeable future. It does this by drawing upon the long and varied experiences of the human race for illumination into complex societal problem. Taylor in Enem (2000) noted that social studies prepare our youths to understand the rapid changes and the development that are taking place in our country. The roles of social studies in Nigerian development according to the National Teacher's Institute (N. T. I.) (2000) are as follows;

- 1. Promotion of democratic living:** Nigeria is trying to be one of the democratic countries in the world, though many Nigerians are yet to imbibe the desired political culture needed for the survival of democracy. Through Social Studies, the child is exposed to some of the political norms and values of the society. These can be done during elections periods e.g. refraining from electoral malpractice, voting for the right leader, and discouraging corrupt malpractice. If the child gets this training from the beginning, he is likely to grow into adulthood with the desired political orientation, patriotic attitude and national consciousness.

2. Inculcating sense of responsibility to others: The old adage of being one's brother's keeper had been eroded by the greedy desire for material wealth. We do not seem to regard our responsibilities to others as fundamental. This is not good because we are trying to destroy the unique feature of our cultural life style. There are numerous ways we can feel concerned for our fellowmen. These include showing sympathy, consoling during grief, aiding during need, directing confusion especially in the case of strangers, and protections in the case of threat and so on. These attributes are fast dying among the youths and for this to permeate the youth is dangerous. Hence, the child in primary school must begin to learn how to develop this spirit of concern and responsibility to others, and this can be done through Social Studies. The child therefore sees peace and security of others as his concern.

3. Respect for the worth and dignity of others: Nigeria is not only diverse in its ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic and social composition, but respect for the worth and dignity of others. The nation now is facing crises in which some ethnic or religious groups try to dominate others because of self-assumed superiority. This brings rancor and prejudice, which causes disunity. The Nigerian child should learn from the beginning that all Nigerians are equal in spite of social and cultural differences between them. By its objectives, Social Studies helps to inculcate in the child the spirit of acceptance of the respect for the worth of every Nigerian.

4. Development of tolerance: Nigerians have different values and beliefs depending on their cultural background. Yet these differences are to be sunk in the interest of National Unity. Unfortunately, a number of Nigerians have failed to tolerate their fellow citizens with different religious, political and ideological views. A number of public disturbances in some parts of the country have been the result of political and religious intolerance. For a peaceful and united Nigeria, citizens must be made to understand that each social, political and religious group has a right to exist and co-exist. If we respect and tolerate one another, no one would be hurt.

5. Increasing awareness: What should border you is why most Nigerians are interested in breaking the laws of the land than helping to uphold them, which of course is one of their civic responsibilities. Some of these acts are done out of ignorance of the consequence. There is a study which reported that most of those who rigged or allowed themselves to be used to rig during the 1979 and 1983 general elections did so out of ignorance about the consequence their actions would have on the effective leadership of the nation. It is therefore necessary for the child to be exposed gradually to his rights and civic duties as a citizen. The creation of this awareness is one of the objectives of social studies in Nigeria Primary Schools.

6. Inculcation of national consciousness and national unity: It is a pity that most Nigerians show more consciousness for their ethnic groups religious denominations and even clubs and societies than the nation. It is important to emphasize the need for us to be proud of our country Nigeria, because we do not have any other one. Americans are proud to identify themselves as Americans. The British do the same. If we are proud of a thing, we have the need to do everything possible to protect and preserve it. Hence, every Nigerian needs to develop a sense of attachments, awareness and identity for the country. Primary School Social Studies helps the child to become acquainted with the National Symbols such as the Flag, the Anthem, the Pledge, and the pictures of leaders and so on. Are all Nigerians feel committed to the pride and preservation of the country? They would then have one thing in common, that is national consciousness which they would want to bequeath to their on - coming generations. This common interest and aspiration help to bind together for national unity.

7. Inculcation of desirable values and social attitude: Social Studies as citizenship education has been seen as a means for the inculcation of desirable values and social attitudes in the child and as a means of social reform. It is in this light that while some people have seen Social Studies as a means of socialization others see it as a means of 'indoctrination. Whichever applies, what is importance is the inculcation of desirable norms and values of the society from one generation to another. Without doing this, the child will find it difficult to fit into the society. Doing this seems to be a unique role of Social Studies because the subject is largely based on socio - cultural context of the society. Some of the societal values to be inculcated are honesty, fair play, hard work, patriotism, obedience, discipline, loyalty, respect, self-confidence, among others. Ololobou (2005), believes that Social Studies education is capable of contributing substantially to the realization of the dreams of Nigeria.

Conclusion

This paper discussed how social studies education could serve as a catalyst for national development. 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 pupils, the desirable values, ideas, beliefs and attitudes which would enable them develop the nation, because it is a subject that trains the 'head' and the 'heart', Obemeata, Ogugua, Agu and Laoseoikan (2009) 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.

Recommendations

1. In Nigeria presently, many universities and research institutes have been established. There is need to justify the huge investments of government, corporate bodies and individual members of the country on these institutions, therefore there is need for our Universities and research institutes to promote the right type of attitudes in our citizens for good leadership in order to put Nigeria on the right path of achieving self-reliance.
2. Government at all levels need to take the teaching of Social Studies more seriously in our schools by enforcing policy that will ensure that experts trained in the right methods, techniques and strategies for its effective teaching handle the subject in order to attain the desired objectives for national development.
3. There is need for an improvement in the infrastructural facilities such as the existing industries and factories, roads, power supply and potable water to encourage foreign investors to have confidence in investing in the nation's economy. This in turn might guaranty self-reliance of the nation.
4. Unemployment of youths should be vigorously addressed to check crime and for the young school graduates to have opportunity to make positive contributions to the development of the country.

References

- Akinlaye A. F. (2013) *Fundamental of Social Studies*. Ikeja pumack Nigeria Limited.
- Alberta Learning (2000). Social Studies 10-20-30. <https://www.learninz.gov.ab.ca/kl2curriculum/bysubjecz/socialdefault.asp>,
- Enem, F. O. (2000). *Fundamentals of Social Studies for Schools and Colleges*. Abuja: Tonem Publicity and Publications Ltd.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). *National Policy on Education*. Abuja: NRDC.
- Kissock, C. (2017). *Curriculum Planning for Social Studies Teaching*. New York: Rhine Holte and Livingstone Inc.
- N. T. I. (2000). *Pivotal Teacher Training Programme for Universal Basic Education Course Book on Social Studies*. Kaduna: NTI.
- Nwalado, E. N. (2009), *Methodology of Social Studies Curriculum*. Asaba: Ekecy Publications.

- Nwalado, E. N. & Okonkwo, N.C (2014), *Thematic Social Studies*. Enugu: Chambus Communication Venture.
- Obemeata, J. O.; Ogugua, J. A., Agu, A.; and Laoseoikan, S. (198L). *Social Studies Methods*. Ibadan: HEB.
- Okobiah, O. S. (2014) *Towards a more Effective Evaluation in Social Studies in the Eighties* in Okobiah, O.S and Udoh; End Time Publishing House.
- Osakwe, E. O. and Itedjere, P.O. (2017). *Social Studies for Tertiary Students in Nigeria* Enugu; NEWAGE Publishers.
- Rodney, W. (2009), *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Tanzania: Publishing House, Dar-es-Salam.
- Seer, D. (2014) "The Meaning of Development", *11th World Conference of the society for International Development, India*.