
EDUCATING FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SOCIAL STUDIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The current socio-economic, political, religious, ethnic and technological situations in Nigeria call for urgent attention and solution. Dishonesty, injustice, corruption in high places, grossly inadequate provision of social amenities etc are problems people have to contend with. These problems would continue unabated if the educational system makes people ineptitude of the required skills for handling such situations. What the nation needs at this crucial time is development of desirable behaviours and virtues that are necessary to contribute meaningfully to national development in learners. This paper examines Social Studies as a means of educating learners and developing in them positive values, attitudes and norms that enhance national development as well as development of problem solving skills to solve the problems that impede progress of the nation. Using Social Studies as a tool, people can imbibe national consciousness and be educated on socially acceptable behaviours and values that are essential to move the nation forward in this 21st century.

Keywords: *National problems, Values, socially acceptable behaviours, national advancement*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is currently facing several socio-economic and political problems which range from rural-urban migration, environmental pollution, deforestation, collapse infrastructure in the area of road and electricity supply, acute poverty and cyber crime among others. Nigerians are indeed living a state of utter apprehension characterized by insecurity of lives and properties. The country is thus facing the challenge of how to overcome these debilitating problems and promote the development of the economy and the people because no meaningful development can take place where these problems persist (Kolawole 2011). Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on full integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen. Social studies emerged as a relatively new subject in the 1960s to achieve this objective. Social studies is therefore not only concerned with acquisition of knowledge but all those problem-solving skills that enable learners think critically about issues and derive conclusions from them. Jiboku (1980) described social studies as that aspect of living which deals with how to develop those skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that characterize a responsible citizen in a free society. Ogundare (2000) stressed that Social Studies focuses on the study of problems of survival in an environment and how to find solutions to them. In fact, it is now old fashion to describe social studies as the study of man; contemporary definitions emphasise the study of people or human beings. Studying people in their various environments means studying them in virtually every context of existence. This implies that social studies is concerned with the totality of the realities of peoples' existence. Generally, social studies develops in learners critical thinking, decision

making, problem solving skills and inculcation of healthy habits that are pivotal to the survival and progress of the nation. Nwagwu (1980) affirmed that the main justification for the teaching of social studies is the contribution it can make to an individual's ability to act wisely, justly, humanly and responsibly when dealing with other human beings and complex social, economic and political situations. Anders (2010) also added that social studies as a school discipline should help all individual members of a society develop the ability to adapt to their ever changing environment and produce citizens who are loyal, obedient, honest, hardworking, dedicated, committed and painstaking. These virtues are essential in making citizens capable of contributing to the building of a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy and a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens. The above virtues are included in the content of social studies and are in line with Nigeria goals and aspirations on education for national development (Osalusi 2010). Effort to translate the objective into reality is what is embedded in the curriculum.

Problems Militating against National Development

National development is the anticipated desirable positive changes that occur in educational, economic, political, socio-cultural and technological aspects of life which usher in an improved standard of living for the benefit of the entire citizenry. Presently, there are evidences that the nation is confronted with series of socio-economic and political problems that hinder national development. Such problems include corruption in high places, grossly inadequate provision of social amenities, unemployment, prostitution, ethnic consciousness, insecurity of lives and properties, kidnapping, election rigging, political killings, misappropriation and embezzlement of public funds, religious crisis, terrorism, 'boko haram' problem etc. Bolarin, Obebe & Olaniyonu (1996) identified other problems listed under high level of indiscipline as drug addiction, hard-drug pushing, armed robbery, fraud, stealing, poor work ethics, political victimization, lateness to and absenteeism from work, oppression, cruelty, injustice, tribalism, impatience, wrong social values, selfishness and avarice. National Planning Commission (2004) recorded that more than 15% of the Nigeria labour force is under-employed or unemployed and about 2million educated and prosperous Nigerians have chosen to immigrate to the US or Europe removing large amount of capital in the process. Observation also shows that poverty and inability to get gainful employment has compelled some Nigerian undergraduates and university graduates respectively to take to street hawking as well as petty trading to make ends meet. Ours is a country where the rich get richer and the masses become impecunious. Fafunwa (2008) believed that Nigeria should be among the first ten developed countries of the world due to her endowment with abundant mineral resources and more well trained manpower than other African countries. It is excruciating to note that despite all these, majority still live in abject poverty. These problems abound due to bad leadership and wrong attitude to matters and issues concerning the nation. Our leaders need a change of attitude to make the nation move forward and to be able to bequeath the right legacy for generations after them.

Educating for National Development through Social Studies

Fafunwa (2008) described national development as the advancement of Nigeria and its over 140 million citizens. It is not surprising that the advancement is not forth coming due to the identified problems. Social studies should focus on how to solve these problems. It is a discipline which if properly programmed and effectively taught should help to solve social problems that are facing developing countries like Nigeria where the old norms are fast losing their grips and no effective substitute to replace them. Fadeyiye (2005) opined that social studies enables individuals to be alive to their social and civic responsibilities and that in a situation where Nigeria is plagued with social problems and indiscipline among adults and youths, social studies is essential to build a strong and united nation by combating such vices. The fact remains that problems emanate from people, are experienced by people and must be solved by people. Fafunwa (2008) postulated that we must re-arrange our priorities and decide to make man (ie the people) the center of our development. He stressed that all factors necessary for national development are man related; this means all men, women and children, not a handful of them. Man (the people) being the central theme of social studies should focus on the resolution of the problems. Man as operationally used implies men and women, young and old, leaders and followers all that must rise to the task of salvaging the situation. Although it might be argued that the leaders are culpable, what is important is to determine what the leaders, all adults inclusive can do to help put the country on the right path to the desired development and greatness. It is not out of place to add that most of the people at the helm of affairs of this great nation today passed through secondary education where they were taught the socially acceptable behaviours and virtues through social studies (or civic/citizenship education). It is therefore pertinent for every individual most especially our leaders not only to develop but also to put into practice as an established custom the good traits imparted in them such as discipline, love, kindness, honesty, hard work, dedication, loyalty, rule of law, endurance, patriotism, love of the nation, choosing to do what is right rather than wrong, eschewing violence etc which younger generations can emulate. People should allow these virtues to manifest in all actions and become part of their habitual ways of life.

Modern development, according to Osalusi (2010) also comes through science and technology and these can only be acquired through dedication, hard work, high sense of cooperation, discipline and responsibility all of which centre on correct attitude to life generally. Social studies is capable of improving attitudes, developing citizens to having correct views of the need of a country and those who have a high sense of national pride and commitment to give the quality of character and proper attitudes with which the problems of the society could be solved in course of time in this country. The fact that citizens of a country acquire the required knowledge and develop skills through education generally cannot be over stressed but the development of desirable attitudes necessary to live comfortably and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society are imparted and imbibed through Social Studies. Equally important is effective implementation of Social Studies programme in schools to entrench citizenship, open mindedness, obedience, trustworthiness and harmonious relationship in learners in their prime age. This is to ensure that young people acquire and internalise the values and norms of the society in which they

live and actively get involved to guarantee that the common good of the citizens is catered for including resisting anti social acts and unguided youthful exuberance. Relevance of social studies to national development hinges on its usefulness in preparing students for:

- the understanding of everyday problems that could be encountered as citizens and how to find solutions to them
- meaningful and useful living
- development of positive habits for good human relationship
- self and national economic efficiency and survival
- effective citizenship through active participation in democratic practices
- willingness to perform civic responsibilities without being forced
- national consciousness and national unity
- social and political progress
- obedience to the laws of the land
- rational decision making and sound judgement
- scientific and technological awareness.

In order to achieve these objectives, social studies should be handled by professionally trained teachers who are accustomed to the rationale for including it in the curriculum and can teach effectively to achieve its objectives for building a developed nation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A well planned and properly executed Social Studies programme should help students to identify with their various environments and develop into effective and well informed citizens that should be able to make meaningful contributions to aid rapid development of the nation. All Nigerians young and old, men and women, irrespective of position and social status should rise to the task of saving this great nation by imbibing positive attitudes that can enhance development since every human being can differentiate between good and bad except under. With teacher's help, students would gain knowledge and acquire skills necessary for finding solutions to vital societal problems. Bearing the objectives of social studies and the issue of national development in mind, the teachers should:

1. create interest in the subject to be able to impart the right type of knowledge and motivate learners to develop right type of values and attitudes
2. encourage the students to develop spirit of national consciousness, patriotism and loyalty to the nation
3. consult many sources of information to keep abreast of new facts since more facts keep pouring in daily especially through information and communication technology
4. employ innovative teaching methods such as inquiry, discussion and problem solving techniques to allow learners to be groomed for the development of critical thinking, problem solving and analytical skills that are necessary for solving problems
5. Attend seminars/workshops for professional improvement.

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