

REPOSITIONING SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ECONOMIC DISTRESSED NATION

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Abstract

Social studies is a course of instruction which has pragmatic social relevance. The socio-economic, political and technological transformation of the society is the primary focus of social studies instruction. It is obvious that social studies education as a discipline whose birth was hoped to transform the society, with disciplined citizens, whose creative ingenuity can help in stabilizing the economy should be effectively implemented at the upper basic level in Nigeria schools. The depressed economy of Nigeria has increased the upsurge of social problems in Nigeria; as manifested in crimes upsurge, unemployment, frustrations, incidences of suicides, retrenchments, abject poverty, amongst others. It is therefore, imperative that social studies instruction at the upper basic education level needed to be refocused in order to equip the learners with survival skills for self-reliant future existence. A productive economy of vibrant citizens will improve the economic atmosphere and enrich the masses with creative outputs in their various businesses and creative enterprise to contribute to the advancement of the economy. The paper examines some shortfalls in social studies education at the upper basic schools in Nigerian educational system. These shortfalls are mostly in the area of implementation, ineffective use of instructional materials, content area and poor knowledge of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and so on. This paper also identifies means of maintaining sustainable viable social studies education programme to sustain a viable economy. The paper recommended that students should be exposed to innovative teaching methods, and seminars, workshops and conferences should be organized for social studies teachers on regular basis to discuss issues and problems that could affect national development amongst others.

Introduction

In a democratic society, the education system must perform a positive and dynamic role in perpetuating and improving that society. The school has an obligation to provide a curriculum designed to develop effective living in the society. Such a curriculum should equip the learners with skills, understanding, attitudes, habits and appreciation that will contribute to this broad goal.

It is for this complementing role that social studies, as a school discipline was introduced in the curriculum. In other words, social studies has its primary function, the treatment of the entire range of man's activities include: self-realization, human relationship, economic efficiency and civic responsibility.

In 1975, social studies replaced history, geography, civics and government in the Nigerian education system. Social studies according to Adaralegbe (1980) is the modern attempt at inter-disciplinary study of a topic, a problem, an issue, a concern or an aspiration. It is a problem approach discipline through which man studies and learns about problems of survival in his environment. Ololobou (2002) viewed social studies education as a programme of study in which learners are exposed to carefully selected physical and social environment realities, with an inbuilt package for the development of skills of various kinds and nurturing of values, attitude and actions conducive to the continued orderly survival of society. Social studies education is an integrated body of knowledge formulated to equip the learner with significant values, attitudes, skills and knowledge in order to be productively functional in the society. Mezieobi (2002) defined social studies education as a citizenship education; as a vehicle for human skill development, as ecological studies and as a value laden field of study. In view of this, social education contents are learners activity-packed and majorly focused on man and his interactive behaviour.

Osakwe and Itedjere (2014) stated that social studies education is an integrated and inter-disciplinary field of study whose ultimate aim is to produce people who are civically competent. Udosen (2001) believes that if well taught social studies education can play an important role in influencing the behaviour, attitudes, interests and feelings or values of the young and yet unborn generations of the society. As a result of the significance attached to social studies education for the realization of the national objectives vis-à-vis vibrant economy, social studies is the vehicle for the inculcation of Nigeria's philosophy of education.

Ogunsanya (2008) opined that if attention is given to the development of desirable attitudes and values in social studies education through careful design of deliberate and systematic teaching of values, social studies is therefore a unique subject. He further posited that its uniqueness places it in the best position to contribute much more than all other subjects added together to achieve national aims of education which according to him include, the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and Nigeria society. Thus, to ensure a viable economic progress in Nigeria, the social studies education has to be repositioned.

Conceptual Framework

Social studies is an inter-disciplinary course of study that studies human beings in groups of inter-relationships within both their social and physical environments. Social studies has been accorded a place of pride in the National Policy on Education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria by making it a core subject in the lower and upper basic schools in Nigeria (NPE, 2014). This is because of the crucial roles of social studies education in preparing and mobilizing students in schools to enable them create awareness and understanding that would transform them into citizens with skills, competences, moral values and reasoned judgments to effectively live, interact, inter-relate and contribute positively to economic, social, political and cultural development of their societies (Okobia, 1985). Mezieobi, Fubara & Mezieobi S.A. (2008) saw social studies as an integrative field of study which probes man's symbiotic relationship with his environments, evolves man with the reflective or contemplative capacities, intellectual, affective, social and work skills, to enable him understand his world and its problems and rationally solve or cope with them for effective living in the society.

Social studies education is founded on the philosophy of life long education that emphasizes the acquisition of political values, attitudes and skills for wise utilization of human and natural resources for personal and societal improvement and progress. The philosophy of social studies education is in agreement with the nature of the Nigeria society (Danladi 2005).

The reflection inquiry approach by social studies is built on the assumption that society creates citizens who can identify related problems, analyse them and take rational decisions. In other words, social studies education aligns national

values and skills with national development programmes. This is considered important because social economic and political programmes are expected to be the product of the country's social, economic and political values and traditions.

Social studies as a school subject came into being in order to modify the dysfunctionality of the past inherited political and social issues in the society. It thus becomes an instrument for equipping learners with the relevant knowledge of their fast changing society. Therefore, social studies' main goal is to prepare the learners to be more humane, rational, responsive and responsible participating citizens in the society. Social studies is concerned with how man interacts in the society. These include what he does with his fellow men in the society and the value system. Different institutions such as social, economic, religious and political, established by man in the society will make him interact well with other people in the society. Social studies deals essentially with the social and public issues such as problems of national unity and diversity, choices, values, economic development and thus prepares students for all relational encounters in the environment.

Depressed economy is an economy which experiences a prolonged period of recession or a significant and prolonged downturn in the economy. Characteristics of a depressed economy of include: declining business activities, falling prices, rising unemployment, public fear and panic, in times of depression, consumers' confidence and investment decreases, causing the economy to shut down.

Challenges of Effective Social Studies Teaching in a Depressed Economy

Despite the position social studies occupies as a core subject in the primary and junior secondary schools, a critical examination of Nigeria state of economic will prove to you that social studies education is faced with numerous challenges as follows:

- **Teacher's incompetency:** Teacher's incompetency is the principal factor in the inappropriate implementation of the social studies curriculum at all levels of the educational system in Nigeria. The domination of the generalist social studies teachers in Nigeria social studies classroom is obvious indication that social studies implementation is bound to be malfunctional. Teaching force in social studies is dominated by personnel trained in history, geography,

economics, political science. This caliber of social studies “teachers”, teach social studies in the light of single subject approach in place of integrated approach. Obebe (2005) noted that teachers still teach history and geography inter-changeably in their social studies classrooms. This approach mar the injection of creative abilities to uplift the economy of Nigeria.

- **Poor Implementation:** - Teachers’ approaches to social studies teaching are largely pedagogical emphasis on cognitive achievement to the utter neglect of the affective and psychomotor domains. Mezieobi (2000) pointed out that the malfunctioning of the social studies curriculum in Nigeria is attributed largely to the inappropriate utilization of teaching methods and techniques relevant to the effective teaching of social studies. Innovative teaching methods as use of ICT, value clarification, future wheel and so on are suggested.
- **Poor Curriculum Contents:** - Social studies education ought to address societal problems through imparting right values, knowledge and skills into the learners. It is obvious that social studies has failed in its implementation. Curriculum contents ought to deal with realities of life. Society is dynamic by this, it implies that the society is constantly changing with time. Most of the social studies texts have become obsolete. Current events such as terrorism, suicide bombing, corruption, are not treated in them. This calls for constant curricular review at all levels of education enterprise.
- **ICT Non -Compliance:** Most social studies teachers are not compliant of ICTs, thus, they do not utilize them in their teaching endeavour.

Sustainability of a Viable Social Studies Programme in a Depressed Economy

If social studies education transformation objectives must be accomplished and the mission of sustaining a viable economy the following should be emphasized:

- Social studies education curriculum should be made to take cognizance of important changes and challenges in the environment and prepares the learners to meet such challenges. The social studies curriculum should be revised periodically and updated with critical, national and international issues in economic management.

- The teaching of social studies should be entrusted in the hands of professionally trained social studies educationist who would utilize the appropriate methods, strategies, techniques and resources germane to effective social studies education implementation.
- The social studies teacher must on constant basis, recharge his professional skills, competences through regular exposure to professional development activity, via workshops, conferences and seminar.
- Government should show positive commitment to the effective implementation of the social studies curriculum through regular supervision and evaluation of teachers' performance in classroom, including funding of research efforts in the area.
- Injection of entrepreneurship education into social studies curriculum is ideal to groom learners with skills for economic survival. Active entrepreneurship education in any nation is a sign of preparing talents for economic growth and progress. Onuoha in Nwaiwu (2013) noted that entrepreneurship education through social studies education commands great influence for the growth of any economy, this is because the citizens will be sensitized to improve the economy through their input and productivity.

How to reposition Social Studies to Revive the Nigerian Economy

Given that the purpose of social studies education is to promote civic competence, knowledge, skill and attitudes requisite for national development, a number of strategies have been recommended on how to reposition social studies for economic development.

- Social studies contents should be designed to include work ethics, dedication, honesty, democratic principles, national ideas and values.
- Students should be taught to show commitment, demonstrate knowledge and skill to participate in national economic activities.
- Expansion of the curriculum to emphasize current economic needs. Entrepreneurship education should be incorporated into social studies curriculum to ensure that students are well equipped to take active role in economic and national development.
- Peace building: Social studies education should address that negative values orientation in our nation today. The issues that are inimical to national

development like cultism, robbery, hostage taking, suicide bombing, pipeline vandalization etc. and reemphasize, peace, patriotism and national consciousness

- Social studies education should develop in the learners the ability to think critically and innovatively. This kind of education empowers the graduates of social studies to respond to the social, economic and political goals of Nigeria.
- There should be deliberate effort to strengthen the pedagogical approaches for social studies teaching with the view of achieving national development. Social studies teaching methods should focus on thought provoking and investigation oriented approach.

Conclusion

Social studies is a veritable instrument for national and economic development. The acquisition of appropriate social studies values such as dedication to duty, hard work, justice among others will boost the economic strength of a country. Social studies as a life subject produces productive citizens that ensure sustainable viable economy.

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