

# REFOCUSING SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN NIGERIA FOR EFFECTIVE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## Abstract

*This paper revealed social studies as a subject of relevance which assist learners to acquire basic knowledge, skills and positive attitudes needed to be responsible citizens and capable of contributing effectively to the society. Having known the capacity of Social Studies education towards the development of good citizens, the paper therefore examines Social Studies as a concept of needs, its objectives in citizenship development and the analysis of the objectives of Social Studies. The paper also considered social studies education as a sure way for national development and how Social Studies education should be refocused for effective national development. It also identified the roles of social studies education towards realizing national development; the manner and approach of refocusing social studies education for national development in Nigeria. This paper therefore concluded that the quest for national development should begin with having responsible citizens who are capable of contributing to the growth of the society and the paper also recommended that Social Studies education should be strengthened by repositioning of curriculum contents, method of teaching and training of teachers to provide the students with basic knowledge and ways of thinking that will prepare them to participate in civic and community life as active and informed citizens. These attributes will proffer national development in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Refocusing, Social Studies Education, National Development, Nigerian Citizens.

## INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of introducing social studies in Africa, including Nigeria is to help the young people develop into responsible active citizens to participate fully in the democratic process and become aware of the power to effect change in their communities, societies and the world at large. This noble subject was introduced as an educational discipline that focusing on educating the youths about the key values, attitudes, knowledge and processes. It takes into consideration how man or individuals relate or interact with one another. It has to do with how people interact with their environment (Akpan, Inyang and Amah, 2022).

It is an interdisciplinary subject with emphasis on social issues and inquiry-based methodology that integrates knowledge from history, geography, ecology, economics, law, philosophy, political science and other social science discipline to give Students' social skills they need to succeed as individuals and as members of the nation. Well informed social studies students will not engaged in any moral and practical challenges that affect their communities and humanity as a whole. Therefore, the ability of students to gain an awareness of who they are, what they want to become, and the society in which they wish to live is made possible through Social Studies teaching. As a result, Social Studies becomes a crucial instrument in the hands of educators, parents, and other adults in society as they work to develop young people who are dependable and strong (Akpan, 2018).

### **Concept of Social Studies**

Social Studies focus on how people interact with their physical, social, political, cultural and economic environment. It also focuses on how man develops, how he affects his surroundings, and how his environment affects him in return. It is regarded as one discipline that is interested in how man interact with their surroundings. According to Kissock (1981) Social Studies "is a programme of study used by society to instill in students knowledge, skills, values, attitude and actions they think significant concerning the relationship human being have with one another, their world, and themselves".

Social Studies pays close attention to how people interact with their surroundings. The subject is constantly evolving some changes due to the nature of man and the effects of time and advancement in technology. It fights against social vices that are bad, Social Studies examine certain national issues and identifies remedies. As a result, the goal of Nigerian Social Studies reflect that spirit of Nigerian educational philosophy. It aids in the growth of the capacity for learning and the acquisition of some fundamental communication, literacy and numeracy abilities. In social studies classes the emphasis is on using critical and reflective thinking to address issues related to man's ability to survive in his environment. Also, our understanding of the interaction existing between man and his environment is a major goal of Social Studies. Therefore, social studies can be characterized as a subject that investigate how man interacts with his natural social surroundings.

Hence, the major concern of the subject centred on the level of relationship between man and his environment; that is how man influence his environment and how his environment in turn affects him. Moreover, Social Studies is the interdisciplinary integration of concepts or content from the humanity and social science with the aim of practicing problem-solving and decision-making, while fostering civic virtues on important social issues. It is a programme that equips individuals with the necessary knowledge, abilities and attitudes to help them comprehend their social and physical environments and to act or behave as responsible patriotic citizens (Akpan, 2018).

### **Objectives of Social Studies**

The major goal of Social Studies is to help young people acquire the knowledge necessary to make informed decision as responsible citizens in a society with diverse culture, democracy, uncertainty principle, lack of integrity and interdependence. The specific objectives of Social Studies are highlighted below;

- To assist students in learning to understand how to adapt to a dynamic, ever changing environment like the Nigerian present hard economic situation.
- To build and strengthen a sense of patriotism. By this, it means that every person needs to be taught to love their nation and become patriotic irrespective of the challenges and instability in the society or country. This is crucial for a vibrant national economic life/development.
- To produce proud citizens: Having a solid sense of one's country's history and the contributions of both men and women to its development is a great asset; that promote national development and self-reliance individual in the country.
- To assist in achieving better comprehension of our surroundings and learning about their issues in order to address them.
- To better our understanding of the significance of becoming responsible citizens, capable of making a positive contribution to the growth of the country by being optimistic, dependable (Akpan, 2015).
- To create an awareness and understanding of social and physical environment in order to conserve it for national development.
- To develop in students, positive attitudes towards the spirit of friendliness and cooperation necessary for a healthy nation, and to inculcate appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hardwork, fairness and justice (FRN, 2014).

### **Analysis of Social Studies Objectives and its Contribution to Citizenship Development**

In the light of the analysis of Social Studies objectives, we agreed that Social Studies is focused on citizenship development. Therefore, the centre of attraction is to reposition the young people at home, school, church and other social group so that they possess the knowledge, skills and values necessary for active participation in society activities.

The main thrust of Social Studies education is geared towards the development of meaningful citizens who are capable of participating in community and national development process (Ikem and Reuben, 2012). Again, the roles of Social Studies education serve as energizer to sustainable national development. It is on this premise that Obama (2009) observed that we need deeper understanding and critical thinking skills acquired through history and Social Studies to fight poverty and homelessness, crime, culture and spiritual discrimination in order to make our nation fairer and freer. Curbing the above highlighted issues served as an effort in agitating for National Development. Udokpong (1998) added that Nigeria lacks a clear direction of purpose, method and content of teaching Social Studies that would have addressed many developmental problems in Nigeria. Enoh (2009) blamed educational system for their slow pace towards development in Nigeria. Achieving this expected goal, contends that the school

**curriculum** has to be revisited and restructured to be in accordance with the vision of the **national** development goals.

Also, Social Studies education has some identified tools that can facilitate the **attainment** of national development goals through the production of responsible citizens **that** will contribute meaningfully to the growth of the society. This can only be seen in the **citizens'** behavioural dispositions which give birth to certain behavioural attributes such **as** honesty, dedication, forthrightness, hardwork and productivity. Based on the available **fact**, a dynamic, purposeful, flexible and people-oriented curriculum should be developed **to** drive the society on the path of growth and development. This is where Social Studies **education** becomes relevant as a vehicle for national development as enshrined in the **national** policy on education which includes;

- A free and democratic society,
- A just and egalitarian society,
- A united, strong and self-reliant nation,
- A great and dynamic economy,
- A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens FRN (2004). Achieving the above national objectives demands a complete state of national development. In pursuit of the above, FRN (2014) added that education is an instrument for national development and Social Studies without any reservation has the capacity and potential to enhance its manifestation as a core subject in the Nigerian school curriculum.

### **Concept of National Development**

National Development is the change in growth and development, which includes **social**, cultural and economic change. It is the **3** ability of a country to improve the social welfare of the people. It is also the expansion and growth of the people in a defined **territory** or government.

Moreover, National development is the capacity of the Country to raise the **standard** of living of its residents. This can be achieved by providing individuals with **basic** livelihood requirements and supply them with employment. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, national development refers to a phenomenon that **embraces** a whole nation. National development therefore can be described as the overall **development** or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious achievement of **a** country or nation.

Idike (2014) added that national development refers to the nationwide **development** in a nation-state. It implies the wellbeing of **covert** majority of the citizens to **materials** terms, it also implies **decreases** inequality levels. Above all, National **development** implies the guarantee of security of lives and property in the nation state. Therefore, social studies being a subject that studies man in totality and also teaches the **learners** desirable morals will enhance national development especially in the aspect of **security** and safety of property in the society.

### **Social Studies Education: A Sure Way for National Development**

Is an established fact that the acquisition of basic knowledge, skills and positive attitudes are basic recipe needed by the citizens to contribute meaningfully to the growth of a society leading to national development. According to Ukpong (1993) national development means increased in skills and capacity, equitable freedom, creativity and self-reliance, self-disciplined, responsibility and material well-being.

Also, positive national development is attainable when the citizens are integrated with the obligation of contributing to the common good of the people by carrying out duties that are beneficial to the community. Example of such general obligations carried out by the citizens includes, civic responsibilities such as voting in public elections like the just concluded 2023 election process, improved work ethics, payment of taxes and obedience to the laws of the land. To actualize the above, it is pertinent to restructure the school curriculum to be responsive to the challenges of molding 21<sup>st</sup> century students who are currently equipped with the capacity to adapt to the present day 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges of contributing to national development efforts (Ikem and Reuben, 2012).

Series of questions raised with regard to national development are;

- What has been happening to poverty?
- What has been happening to unemployment?
- What has been happening to scarcity of moment to circulation?
- What has been happening to inequality?

These questions were the results of the present day state of development in most of the nations of the world, especially Nigeria. A nation that gear towards growth and development must place emphasis on a re-orientation and re-organization of institutions and transformation of the people's welfare to beef up their standard of living. Educationally, economically, politically and socially.

Apart from the above highlighted questions concerning national development, other questions relevant to the issues of national development also include;

- What really give rise to high rate of corruption and crime in the society?
- Why the high rate of insecurity?
- What causes the high rate of human trafficking, killings kidnapping and drugs abuse?
- Why such intimidating injustice in the society?
- Why are corrupt public officials not properly prosecuted?
- Why election in Nigeria are always rigged. A reduction of the above question from high to low is a positive signal of development for a country.

Moreover, it is observed that if our young people are properly informed or prepared for civic competence and presented with a conceptualized identity and consciousness for the future, national development would be ensured (Ikem and Reuben, 2012).

Therefore, Ikem and Reuben (2012) added that for the production of responsible citizenry status the following criteria should be the borderline for students and teachers;

- I. Understanding the role, rights and responsibilities of a citizen in a democratic society as well as in the global community.
- ii. Participating in the democratic process by making substantial contributions and

rational-decision.

- iii. Respecting the dignity and worth of self and others in a democratic setting.
- iv. Respecting citizens voting right by giving the citizens the mandate of their choice.

Thus, when the youth are properly integrate with the ethical conducts of life. This will enhance their capacity to love their country, develop an understanding of their culture which is dynamic and ever changing situation of the promotion of a nation's cultural heritage and diversity.

### **Refocusing Social Studies Education for Effective National Development**

The idea about Social Studies education centres on the promotion of civic competence; knowledge, skills and attitudes as ingredients for national development. Series of modalities have been made on how to refocus the subject so that national development processes would be ensured;

- Social studies contents should be designed to include work ethics, dedication, honesty, national ideals and values, democratic principles, skills for data collection and analysis, decision making process and problems solving.
- Learners should be taught how to show commitments, demonstrate knowledge and skills and how to take part in national economic life and democratic activities.
- Social Studies education curriculum should be made to address current issue confronting the nation. Example issues that are inimical to national development such as terrorism, armed robbery, hostage taking, suicide bombing, pipeline data vandalism, election rigging.
- It should be capable of developing the learners' ability to think critically and also be innovative. This type of education affords the products of the system the ability to respond to social goals economic realities and future life challenges.
- Effort should be made to strengthening pedagogical approaches for Social Studies teaching with the hope of actualizing the need for national development. It is on this basis that Enoh (2009) observed that we need an aspect of education that is priority is in developing citizens who are capable of making contribution towards national development. Social Studies teaching method therefore should focus on thought-provoking and investigation-oriented approach.
- It should be interactive, integrative and dynamic in order to enhance a transformative discipline that will chart a course for national development.
- Lastly, social studies education should be re-invigorating and adopted as millennium pedagogical initiative to address issues of national development. Ikem and Reuben, (2012) is in line with Nwachukwu (2007) which stated that there is need to create and adopt new sets of paradigms that should see problem-solving from new perspective and as a viable option.

In support of the above positions on how social studies should be refocused for positive national development, is in consonance with Obasanjo's presentation at the Summit meeting in Dakar, Senegal in 2008. He stated that education for Africa today must change in content. He further explained that educators should not focus on how much a child learnt, but on the process and how learning ready is the child. Also, he added that

ignorance is one of the major setback of development, which Africa must deal with in the 2000 millennium.

Obasanjo (2007) observed that the challenges in Nigeria will be addressed based on a set target to become one of the largest economies in the world by the year 2020. This should be only attainable and achievable when we focus on path of economic prudence, reform and realities. Social Studies education curriculum should be made to take cognizance of the necessary changes and challenges in the environment and prepares the learners to meet such changes and challenges (Enoh, 2009).

Also, Social Studies curriculum should equip the learner with the knowledge of information communications technology (ICT), local and global challenges, conflicts resolution, peace building, health and health needs and myriads of social economic and political demands that confront individuals and the entire society on daily basis.

### **The Roles of Social Studies Education in National Development**

Social Studies is useful in the socialization of citizens. It trains citizens to know and practice the rules, norms and culture of the society in which they live Social Studies education plays a vital role in the development of the critical and rational thinking ability of the citizens for practical social life. Apart from this, it also helps in promoting political literacy and encouraging democratic values and principles in taking dynamic problems in society. The major objectives of the programme is the production of effective citizens who will be committee to the national ideas, goals and developmental agenda. Therefore, Social Studies:

- help in creating awareness and understanding of the social and physical environment to conserve it to national development.
- help the learners or individuals to develop the capacity to learn and acquire certain basic skills of literacy, numeracy and critical thinking essential to the forming of sound judgement concerning social, economic and political issues.
- help to teach the child to acquire the relevant body of knowledge and information necessary for personal development and also contributes to the develop of the society.
- help to develop the learners habit of appreciation for the diverse nature and interdependence Nigerian societies and national and international communities.
- help to inculcate a positive attitude towards the spirit of relationship and cooperation necessary for a healthy society.
- help to inculcate the appreciate value of honesty, integrity, hardwork, fairness and justice.
- Obedient to the laws, rules and regulations of the land.
- Help to develop nationalistic and patriotic geared towards societal, improvement.

These citizenship rules, norms and values are essential for national development. Akpan, Inyang and Amah (2022) added that only effective and productive citizens who are products of Social Studies education would contribute to national development in midst of Nigeria who are selfish and materialistic.

To facilitate the development of individuals that will contribute to the positive national development through social studies programme, the following are quite necessary.

- Social Studies education learning process should be activity packed to enhance active involvement and participation of the learners. This active participation to Social Studies teaching leads to activities issues and trends in socio-political environments, thereby making them to contribute directly or indirectly to national development.
- Social Studies curriculum content should be focused towards realizing positive attitudes and values like hardwork, diligence, cooperation, patriotism, honesty, self-help etc as against socio-psychological defective behaviour as self-centredness, bribery and corruption which are inimical to national development.
- Social Studies should be made to have positive developmental trends in Nigeria. This implies that the subject should try to re-socialize the once inert and development of unconscious citizens to embrace the global culture of mobilizing human and materials resources towards national development.
- Social Studies should be made to reflect the Nigeria social realities, social needs and social aspirations. Then, Social Studies curriculum should be made flexible in order to accommodate current contemporary issues and problems relevant to national development.

From the above discussion and analysis concerning social studies education, achieving the foregoing laudable roles towards national development, the following become quit imperative.

- Teaching Social Studies in Nigerian educational institutions should be entrusted in the hands of professionally trained Social Studies educationist who will be capable of utilizing the appropriate methods, strategies, techniques and resources germane to effective Social Studies education delivery.
- Social Studies teachers must on regular basis, recharge his professional skills and competences through regular exposure to professional development activities.
- The training programme in Social Studies education should stressed on competencies necessary for effective Social Studies teaching and learning.
- Training programme in Social Studies education should be subjected to periodic evaluation to be inconsonance with the changing societal demands and the current trends and realities.
- Government should indicate positive interest and commitment to the effective implementation of Social Studies curriculum through adequate funding and resources development.
- Formalized in and out school Social Studies learning activities should be complemented with informal and non-formal educational activities and strategies with emphasis on desirable social attitudes, habits and values that are essentials to social participation in national development.
- The standard of living of the people should be improved in order to elicit a minimum

of their cooperation in nation's developmental bids.

- Nigeria's dependency on foreign aid, imported raw material, luxuries and finished products, technology and expertise should be reconsidered as they are counter-productive to national development.
- Rural communities should be made to take active participation in national development project through a redesigning and involvement of the rural dwellers towards enthusiastic commitment to national development effort. Socio-political stability is a signal to meaningful national development. Social Studies education should be made to address the various security challenges in Nigeria today. Therefore, peaceful environment is a necessary condition for national development. Thus, Social Studies education, if given necessary attention and priorities towards citizenship development, will maintain and promote national development. This is because Social Studies education focuses on inculcation of good moral development and other basic behaviour needed in the society.

### **Conclusion**

Going by the analysis and different viewpoints on the objectives and roles of Social Studies as a way forward for national development, the study maintains that Social Studies education is the potent force in the pursuit of development challenges in Nigeria. The paper also sees the use of Social Studies education as a realistic instrument for the production of responsible citizens who will be capable of making reasonable contribution towards the country's thrust for national development.

Also, Social Studies present itself as a subject that can proffer solution to national development especially when challenges arise by promoting and educating the culture that stimulates civic competence, critical thinking skills and other complex socio-economic and political issues of state policy. Social Studies education therefore, represents educators' pedagogical changes that enhance thinking about what is expected in productive activities that will contribute to national development.

Thus, for Social Studies education teaching to be meaningful and functional for national development, a total rejuvenation of Social Studies curriculum contents has to be adopted, where emphasis should be laid on ethical conduct delivery for production of good citizens. It is not an overstatement to voice out that responsible citizenship is a sure way of any national development efforts.

### **Recommendations**

This paper recommended that Social Studies should be given prior attention in all aspect of its implementation such as curriculum contents, restructuring teaching method, training of teacher, teaching strategies and other learning facilities for the advancement of national development in Nigeria. Therefore the following should be considered:

1. The teacher should select material in such a way as to inculcate the spirit of patriotism.
2. It should make deliberate effort to change the learner to examine certain positive values and attitudes and they need to adopt them.
3. It should give the learners a number of relevant activities so that they can form the needed attitudes, values and skills.
4. It should make learners think critically about issues and social problems.
5. The learners should be made to appreciate the needs to cooperate with fellow citizens for peace and unity of this country.
6. They should be taught the need to appreciate their cultural values and respect for that of other people in order to move the nation forward.

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