

REPOSITIONING OF THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY THROUGH SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION: A PARADIGM SHIFT

Arinze Francis O.
&
Ezeuzo Pauline U.

Abstract

The paper is titled "Repositioning of the Nigerian Economy through Social Studies Education: A Paradigm Shift". Among the key concepts defined in this paper include social studies education and economy. Furthermore, it x-rayed the roles of social studies education in repositioning the national economy for the benefits of all. Finally, the paper recommended among other things that there should be periodic review of social studies curriculum to reflect the social realities, needs and aspirations of the people in the society, there should be adequate implementation of social studies curriculum with emphasis on attitudinal change and skills acquisition, effective methods should be employed in teaching and learning of social studies education for optimal realization of the laudable objectives and more qualified social studies education teachers should be employed in schools for effective teaching and improved learning outcome.

Keywords: Social studies education and economy.

Instruction

Studies have revealed that one of the major challenges of the developing countries is poor economy, which is often attributed to political instability, poor governance among the political class and high rate of irresponsibility among the citizens. This is why Machi (2016) observes that poverty is one of the major problems of all developing economies. According to him, poverty in developing countries is becoming endemic and takes the form of vicious cycle. It is important to understand that development is a multi-dimensional concept that involves major changes in social structure, popular attitudes, national institutions, economic growth and distribution of wealth. Thus, development in a nation brings higher income generation, qualitative education, higher standard of health and nutrition, friendly environment, equal opportunities for jobs, employment and access to social services, greater individual freedom and improved technology (Argote, 2000).

However, among all nations of the world, the burning desire is always to achieve greatness social, political, technological and economic spheres and Nigeria is not an exception in this regard. This is why one of the five national education objective maintains that Nigeria's education system should be able to assist her to become a "united, strong and self reliant nation" (FRN, 2004). To attain a self reliant status is a worthwhile goal, but it requires dedication, determination, perseverance and honesty of purpose by all concerned, as well as disciplined citizens.

Enoh (2009) posits that teaching and learning should involve helping learners to discover certain facts or answer to a given problem and this idea was supported by NTI (2009). This is very important, especially in the modern world where every nation moves in jet speed on developmental strives. The contribution of science to the economic advancement and technological growth cannot be under estimated in this respect.

Considering success recorded by countries like Japan, China, Russia and USA in the areas of science and technology, it has been discovered that it was never a product of chance. Rather, it is as a result of a well planned science education programme, which was co-ordinated and sustained by selfless and visionary political leaders. This is why Enoh (2009) blamed education for the slow pace of development in Nigeria. According to him, to achieve the expected result, the school curriculum has to be revisited and reviewed to fall in line with the vision of national development.

This explains why in Nigeria, despite several years of attempts or effort towards promotion and advancement in science and technology, as well as improved and stable economic system, the nation is still technologically low and economically backward. Nigeria, which recently celebrated her 57th year of political independence, is still far behind expectation in economic and technological development, despite her numerous human and materials resources. This ugly trend might not be unconnected with high level of corruption and irresponsibility in the country's social and political life, which only makes the country politically, socially, technologically and economically dependent.

Therefore, if all the efforts towards economic development by various tiers of government of Nigeria for self-reliance will be fruitful, indiscipline and irresponsible lives, as well as corrupt practices among the citizens must be eradicated. They include armed robbery, excessive materialism, religious bigotry, ethnicism, lack respect for elders and constituted authorities, misappropriation

of public fund, human trafficking, drug pushing, bribery, prostitution, examination malpractice, electoral violence and corner cutting.

Adefabi (2002) also contends that Nigeria has the required material resources and man power that could make her great, since many highly rated world-class scientists, professionals and experts that have bagged both national and international honours are Nigerians. This therefore shows that the economic problems the country faces may be greatly connected to the political and social lives of the people.

This is where social studies education comes in. Social studies education has been identified as a potent instrument that can facilitate the attainment of national development goals through the production of responsible citizens that will contribute maximally to growth of the society. Anders (2010) asserts that social studies education helps the members of the society develop the ability to adapt to their ever-changing environment and produce hardworking, dedicated and committed citizens. The above virtues are essential and capable of making citizens to contribute meaningfully to the attainment of National Philosophy of Education, which include:

- i. A free and democratic society;
- ii. A just and egalitarian society;
- iii. A unite, strong and self-reliant nation;
- iv. A great and dynamic economy;
- v. A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens. (FRN, 2004).

Social studies education has been identified as potent instrument that can stabilize the Nigerian economic system through the production of citizens that contribute maximally to the growth of the society. Thus, through qualitative social

studies education curriculum, which will imbue the citizens with the right skills, knowledge and attitudes for social and political lives, as well as work etiquette, there will be accelerated economic development in the nation.

Conceptual Explanation

Concept of Social Studies Education

Social studies education has been defined by various scholars in different ways based on their orientations and backgrounds. Kissock (1981) defines social studies education as a programme of study, which the society uses to instill in the students the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions it considers important in the relationships human beings have with each other and the physical world. Similarly, Osakwe and Itedjere (2009) defines social studies education as a contemporary and environmentally, focused field of study that provides the learner with requisite knowledge, skills, values and attitudes and competence to contribute meaningfully in Nigeria's national development. The above definitions maintain that social studies education is a subject that mould the characters of the citizens and inculcate necessary knowledge and skills for positive contributions to the society. On the other hand, Osakwe and Itedjere (1993) state that social studies education is an integrated and interdisciplinary field of study, whose ultimate aim is to produce people who are civically competent. In a nutshell, social studies education is an interdisciplinary study of man's interactions with his environment, which imbues in the learners right knowledge, attitudes, values and skills that would make them effective and functional citizenry, which contribute positively to

development of the society.

Concept of Economy

Economy can be said to be the relationship between production, trade, and supply of money in a particular country or region. On the other hand, economy is a sector of the social system that concerns with the production and distribution of goods, trade, income distribution, savings and investment. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2005), economy is a concept, which is connected with trade, industry and development of wealth of a country, an area or a society.

The Roles of Social Studies Education in Repositioning the Nigerian Economy

The introduction of social studies education in Nigerian curriculum in 1969 brought a new hope of transformation in social, political, technological and economic system of the nation. Nigeria as a country has her peculiar social characteristics and problems. The country consists of over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own value systems and identities. The nation is bedeviled by indiscipline and social vices, which make the realization of the goal of a united, great and self-reliant nation very difficult. This is where social studies education plays a vital role. The National Council for Social Studies (NCSS, 2010) sees social studies education as discipline that provides coordinated and systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as Anthropology, Economics, Geography, Political Science, History, Religious Studies, Law, Philosophy, Sociology, as well as Mathematics and Natural Sciences. This is with a view of addressing issues of the society in a

holistic way in order to arrive at the true position of problems in the society.

Social studies as earlier noted, is an instrument of change and development in a society. The subject is an innovation brought to Nigeria from Britain and America after series of workshops organized to share the successes recorded in these countries in their social, political and economic lives through the content of social studies education. One important characteristics of social studies is that it mirrors the society where it is implemented, therefore making the content to reflect the needs and aspirations of the people. Thus, Johnson and Johnson (2002) assert that individuals in a society need to know the factors that contribute to who they are, to what they think, feel and believe; to what they decide to do; to why they are likely to make certain decisions and act in particular ways; and how they perceive themselves, their abilities, their personalities and the world. This is why Chikwelu (2007) opines that social studies is a societal creation and a corrective measure to the problems and challenges facing a society. For example, social studies education was introduced in Ghana to enable the people learn effective ways of improving the national economy after decades of military rule in the country, while in Nigeria it was introduced after the civil war that devastated the country, causing disunity. It was for the purpose of unity, national consciousness, good leadership and followership qualities, tolerance, justice, fair play, democratic principles and self reliance.

Similarly, Kissock (1981) observes that the unique feature of social studies education is that it draws the purpose and scope directly from the

current needs of the society, making it more sensitive to change in the society than other subjects.

Mezieobi (1992) listed the national philosophy for social studies education in Nigeria as follows:

- i. Inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
- ii. Inculcation of right knowledge, attitudes and values necessary for survival in the society.
- iii. Training of the mind to understand the world around us
- iv. Acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies for the survival of individuals and positive contribution to the society (p.14).

According to Rodney (1979) national development implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing. Alberta (2000) posits that the acquisition of basic knowledge, skills and positive attitudes are basic ingredients needed by citizens to contribute meaningfully to the national development. Thus, modern development and economic breakthrough come through sound education that helps people to acquire appropriate virtues that promotes the society, such as hard work, dedication, high sense of cooperation, discipline, responsibility, payment of taxes and obedience to the laws of the land. Social studies education is capable of improving attitudes, developing citizens with correct views of the needs of a country and proper attitudes towards solving/addressing the problems of the country. The knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which social studies education for Nigerian schools provides for the learners thereby vitalizes the subject as one of the fields of study

through which national economy can be improved. This is why Enoh (2009) asserts that social studies education is a potent instrument that can facilitate the attainment of national development goals through the production of responsible citizens that will contribute maximally to the growth of the society.

National development in Nigeria aims at the attainment of general accepted standards and norms in respect to the nation's economic system, political organization, family life and overall relations and responsibilities between the state and individual persons or communities (Argote, 2000). Social studies education in Nigeria has a special task to perform in transforming Nigeria into a modern state through its programme of studies that reflect the needs and aspirations of the people. Nwachukwu (2007) maintains that social studies education is very capable of healing social and political wounds of the past, nurturing the most recent hopes in good relationship and nationalism, as well as engendering constructive reforms, to make a just and progressive society. It also helps to foster the desired self reliance, national economic efficiency and national pride. He argues that efficient economic system can only be realized in a society where there is a stable political system, good governance, peaceful co-existence among the populace and responsible citizenship. These virtues can only be acquired through efficient teaching and learning of social studies education. In corroboration, Akinlaye (2003) notes that social studies education contributes in making citizens understand the diversities among people of Nigeria and work towards promoting unity in diversities. More so, the subject enables

the learners to acquire some relevant skills that help them survive and contribute meaningfully to development of society. Such skills include the basic skills of reading and writing, including other skills like basket making, hair plaiting, rope making, broom making etc. Many of these skills help for holistic development of the citizens in the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor domains, which is very vital for the actualization of self-reliant goal and accelerated economic development in the country.

Since education has been identified as an instrument per excellence in national development, school curriculum must be responsive to the challenges of the society. In Nigeria, there has been an aged long problem of corruption, indiscipline and irresponsibility among the citizens, which directly and indirectly hinder national development. Based on this, Enoh (2009) opines that social studies education has the capacity of moulding the character of the 21st century students and thoroughly equip them with the desired social norms, values and attitudes for survival and positive contribution to the society.

Social studies education as a problem solving subject plays a vital role in ensuring that the nation attains a high level in national security and sustainable national development. Akinlaye (1997) opines that social studies education offers medication and provides the needed reforms or changes in society as well as catering for its survival by removing all barriers between groups and classes within a society. He reiterates that social studies education helps to promote peace, co-operation, security and national pride. It affords the citizens

opportunity to develop positive attitudes towards social-economic development of the nation. The teaching of social studies education will enhance desirable attitudes and patriotism at all levels of education. It will also produce citizens who will identify with the country as their own, work for peace and progress of the country. Thus, the teaching of positive attitude and appropriate values of integrity, hard-work, honesty,, justice, fairness, co-operation and dedication to duties will make the citizens more responsible and contribute immensely to the social and economic development of the country (Odah, 2009 and Okiro,2008).

In the same line of thought, Alberta (2000:20) itemizes the roles of social studies education in repositioning the national economy as follows:

1. Equipping the learners with intellectual skills essential for national decision-making and sound judgment.
2. Ability to participate on the nation's political system.
3. Making the learners becomes willing to assume and perform civic responsibilities without coercion.
4. Obedient to laws, rules and regulations of the land.
5. Ability to understand, respect and accommodate other individuals' views and aspirations.
6. Making citizens become hardworking, dedicated and honest in individual and corporate activities.
7. Ability to co-exist harmoniously with other members and groups in the society.
8. Developing nationalistic and patriotic spirit geared towards societal improvement.

Therefore, there is no doubt that the attainment of national development is strongly linked to responsible citizenship. Thus, if the citizens are properly prepared for civic competence, right knowledge and appropriate skills, as well as developing strong consciousness for the future, there is no doubt that the burning desire and aspiration of the country for national development, which transforms the social, political, technological and economic sectors of the society would become a reality.

Conclusion

Nigeria, which is a product of amalgamation of Southern protectorate and Northern protectorate in 1914 by British government has been bedeviled with several social, political and economic problems, such as colonialism, civil war, military coup and counter coup, long period of military administration, religious intolerance, incessant agitations by different component religious and ethnic groups in the country, electoral violence and most recently economic recession. These have brought untold hardship to the masses. However, social studies education was introduced as one of the core curriculum in Nigeria education system that aims at repositioning the social, political and economic systems of the country. Therefore, it is believed that proper implementation of social studies curriculum will bring about desirable change in the attitudes of the citizens and help them to acquire appropriate skills for holistic development of the citizens and overall national development.

Recommendations

Based on this study that has revealed the potency of social studies education in repositioning the national economy, the following recommendations are made:

- i. There should be periodic review of social studies education curriculum in order to reflect the social realities and aspirations of the nation, as well as incorporating emerging socio-economic issues in our society, such as unemployment, poverty, misappropriation of public fund, mediocrity in work places, over population and inflation.
- ii. There should be adequate implementation of social studies education curriculum, which emphasis should be on attitudinal change and skills acquisition. Such attitudes should include hard work, diligence, honesty and accountability, dedication and fair play. On the other hand, the skills should include vocational competence such as basket making, pottery, wood carving, hair plaiting, black smiting, soap making, palm wine tapping, rope making etc. These will go along way to reduce the address the unemployment rate in the country, as many young people become self-reliant (Arinze, Omenka and Ekwealor, 2011).
- iii. Effective methods should be employed in teaching and learning of social studies education for the realization of the landable objectives of subject. Such methods include discussion, project, inquiry, field trip and problem solving.
- iv. There is the need to employ more social studies education teachers in our schools in order to ensure that experts handle the subject for the attainment of the desired

objectives for national development.

References

- Adefabi, R.A. (2002). National economic life in Iyela, et al (Eds): *An introduction to social studies 1(1)*, Lagos: Lagoon Publishers.
- Aders, W. (2010). Engaging pedagogies in elementary social studies. USA: *National Council for Social Studies (NCSS)*.
- Akinlaye, A.F. (2003). *Fundamental of social studies*. Ikeja: Pumack Nigeria Limited.
- Alberta, L. (2000). *Social studies 10-20-30 (online)*, Retrieved January 6, 2003.
- Argote, L. (2000). *Knowledge transfer in organization: learning from the experience of other*. *Organizational behaviour and human decision processes* 82(1), 1-8.
- Arinze, F.O., Omenka P.C. & Ekwealor P.E. (2011). Education for attitudinal change in Nigeria: The role of social studies education. *Journal of Art and Social Sciences*, 4(1), P.73-86. Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe.
- Chikwelu, V.N. (2007). *Special method of teaching social studies*. West and Solomon Publishing Company Limited.
- Enoh, A.A. (2009). *Education for national development: Revisiting the curriculum*. A key address

presented on the occasion of the 3rd Biennial Conference of Curriculum Organization of Nigeria (COJV), Calabar Chapter held on the 12th February, 2009.

- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National policy on education (4th ed)*. Nigeria: NERDC Press.
- Johnson, C.I. & Johnson, A.K. (2002). Towards social-economic development in Nigeria: The way forward. *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 10(2), p.115-122.
- Kissock, C. (1981). *Curriculum planning for social studies teaching*. New York: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.
- Machi, I.O. (2006). Issues of poor economic growth and under-development: beyond sound economic policies in *Readings in Arts and Social Sciences*, 1(1), p.284-290.
- Mezieobi, K.A. (1992). *Themes in social studies education in Nigeria*. Owerri: Whyte and Whyte Publishers.
- National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) (2010). What is social studies and why is it important. *National curriculum standards for social studies: A framework for teaching learning and assessment: U.S.A*.
- National Teachers Institute (NTI) (2009). *Manual for the retraining of primary school teachers' social studies*. A millennium development goals project.

Kaduna.

- Nwachukwu, D.N. (2007). *Education and humanity: Nigerian renaissance and millennium pedagogical shift in paradigms*. 39th Inaugural Lecture of University of Calabar – Nigeria.
- Odah, J.O. (2009). *Good governance as a pre-requisite for the realization of vision 2029 and seven points agenda*. A paper presented at a conference of senior executive course. No31 of the National Institute.
- Okiro, M.M. (2008). *Security and safety management*. A keynote address presented at a two day seminar organized by HFC consulting, Lagos.
- Osakwe, E.O. & Itedjere, P.O. (1993). *Social studies for tertiary students in Nigeria*. Enugu: New Age Publishers.
- Osakwe, E.O. & Itedjere, P.O. (2009). *Social studies for tertiary students in Nigeria*. Enugu: New Age Publishers.
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2005) (7th ed). England: Oxford University Press.