



SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined Social Studies education and sustainable national development in Nigeria. Attempts were made to highlight the role of Social Studies in National development, challenges of Social Studies education in Nigeria and to ascertain to extent to which educational objectives can affect positively on global developmental challenges. It also discusses the essentials to sustainable economic development. The paper concludes that education objectives must articulate the important aspects of diversity in national development.

KEYWORDS: Education, Social Studies, Sustainable development, National Development

INTRODUCTION

The role of Social Studies in the socio-political and economic advancement of any society makes it relevant as a subject in the school curriculum. Since education is the major instrument for sustaining and transforming in society Akintunde (2004) cited in Akinseye (2008) posits that social studies is important because It deals with social problem. Ajitoni & Olubela (2010) says that instruction in Social Studies, as with many curriculum subjects is aimed at training the learners of today for their roles in meeting the needs of the society in the future. Ogunsanya, Ajiboye & Olubela (2010) emphasis that Social Studies has the capacity to transform learners more from individual beings into social beings. This further establishes the transformative roles of Social Studies education through its holistic approaches of integrating acceptable social norms, values, attitudes and skills in the learners. Oyeleke (2011) in related studies asserts that the relevance of Social Studies is not limited to socio-cultural and political life of a society alone, but it also fosters acquisition of knowledge and right types of values and attitudes necessary for making the learner to be environment friendly and stimulate in them such behaviours and practices that promote sustainable development of the natural environment.



Social Studies Education and the Nigeria Philosophical Goals and Objectives

The Nigeria education system has undergone many changes in the last few years and no doubt there will be many more changes by the end of the century. Since a national policy on education is the government way of achieving that part of its national objectives that can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and objectives of the nation. The five main national objectives of Nigeria as stated in the Second National Development plan and endorsed as the necessary foundation for the National policy in education are the building of:

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

In order to enhance the realization of the above goals the national education aims and objectives are identified as follows:

1. The inculcation of National consciousness and national unity
2. The inculcation of right type of values and attitude for the survival of individual and the Nigerian society.
3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and
4. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities, competences both mental and physical and equipment for individual to live in and contribute positively to the development of his society and nation building.

Establishing the crucial role of social studies education in the actualization of the overall objectives Olubola & Ajitomi (2010) restated that social studies contents motivate individual citizen toward self-realization, better human relationship of individuals and national consciousness, national unity as well as toward social, cultured, economic, political scientific and technological progress.

Objectives of Social Studies Education

1. Create awareness of and sensitivity to man's environment



2. Influence man's attitude positively to social, cultural political values and total environment.
3. Enable men to acquire skills for solving societal and environmental problem.
4. Equip men the basic understanding of the knowledge of the total environment.
5. Encourage voluntary participation in social and civic duties while developing the sense of responsibility.

Challenges of Social Studies Education in Nigeria

Social Studies as a school has its inherent challenges; some of these challenges are peculiar to the discipline while others are of a general nature in education. Education constitutes the major instrument for sustainable human development and fulcrum around which every other activity revolves (Tahir, 2016). Nations which have recorded tremendous feats in the world heavily relied on the instrumentality of education. However, in Nigeria there seems to be a daily decline in the standard of education. According to the chief Olusegun Obasanjo in his presidential speech, he stated that education system as it stands is a living proof of the damages that bad governance can do to our society and social structure.

Tahir (2006) identified a number of daunting challenges which Nigerian education is confronted with.

They are as follows:

- i. Gender equity in education
- ii. Dearth of teachers
- iii. Overcrowded classrooms
- iv. Inadequate infrastructures
- v. Poor funding of education

However, the challenges listed above are among the shortcomings inherent in Social Studies education, others are inadequate textbooks, instructional materials and qualify teachers etc are confronting the discipline.

Therefore, the government at all levels must contribute their respective quota by providing funds to various educational institutions teaching the subject to abate these challenges; this effort will enhance the achievement of sustainable national development.



And teachers who are to disseminate knowledge must be properly motivated to give and put in their best. As such the need for salary increment and better working conditions will promote efficiency and productivity in our educational institutions.

For the purpose of achieving sustainable national development, government should encourage that learning take place under a conducive environment. As such the dilapidated infrastructural facilities in schools and colleges, must be improved and building of new classrooms for students in order to enhance conducive teaching and learning environment in our educational institution.

What is Sustainable Development?

The UN Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainable development as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Sustainable development has also been defined as the management of our natural resources in a manner that meets the needs of the present generation while protecting and restoring the natural environment for future generations. Vinceta Singh (2014) argues that sustainable development means attaining a standard between the present and future needs. According to her, it means equity in development and sectoral actions across space and time. It requires the integration of economic, social and environmental approaches towards development.

Sustainability has been defined as the ability of a system to maintain a well defined level of performance over time and which requires the ability to enhance output without damaging the essential ecological integrity of the system Johda (1990) quoted by Grace O. Erbuonwan et al (1990). In the opinion of Glenm to Wiser and Daniel N MagrawTr (2005), the concept of sustainability means that development efforts including those aimed at protecting the health and the environment should be undertaken in a manner that will not frustrate the ability of future generations of meet their needs. Environmental sustainability requires that the management of the environment should be in such a way that ensures that the environment and its natural resources give their optimum yield and preserved for the benefit of both present and future generations. According to Daly (1990) it is the rate of renewable resource harvested pollution creation and non-renewable resource depletion that can be contained definitely and if they cannot be continued, then they are not



sustainable. It is a development model that sees the balancing of environment protection against economic prosperity.

Sustainable development is the process of judicious use and conservation of natural resources for the overall improvement in the quality of life for the present and future generations in long term basis. The concept of sustainable development was formulated as a holding tool as well as framework for the realization of economic growth in an environmentally viable world. Three interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development are recognized world-wide in the transition towards a sustainable society. There is economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, and social sustainability, within this concept, the environment dimension lays a significant role being the natural system which serves as the surrounding medium in which the social and economic systems are embedded. The environment is a condition for sustainable development. Society is the end for which development is undertaken and economy is the means to achieving that end. The maintenance of environmental structure is therefore crucial for long term economic development. Because life on earth is conditioned upon a healthy environment, the environmental pillar, must of necessity, be viewed as of utmost importance to the economic and social pillars of sustainability.

The Role of Social Studies in Ensuring Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The UN world summit in Johannesburg in 2002 where the re-orientation of current education system was outlined as key to sustainable development promotes the development of the knowledge, skills, understanding, values and actions required to create a sustainable world which ensures environmental protection and conservation, promote social equity and encourages economic sustainability.

The concept of social studies education developed largely from environmental education, which has sought to develop the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behavior in people to care for their environment. The aims of social studies education is to enable people to make decisions and carryout actions to improve our quality of life, enable the children to develop an understanding of their immediate surroundings and developing certain skills which will enable them to deal with and manage the forces of the world in which they live. And educating the young citizens in harmonious living and in an



understanding of the different peoples who make up the society. It also aims to integrate the values inherent in sustainable development into all aspects and levels of learning.

There are a number of key themes in social studies education and while the dominant focus is on environmental concerns. It also addresses themes such as citizenship, peace and conflicts, poverty alleviation, ethnics, democracy and governance, natural resource management and biological diversity.

It is generally accepted that certain characteristics are important for the successful implementation of education sustainable development as applied to social studies education reflecting the equal importance of both the learning process and the outcomes of the education process (adapted from UN Decade of Sustainable Development. UNESCO Nairobi Cluster, 2006). Education Sustainable Development should:

1. Be embedded in the curriculum in an interdisciplinary and holistic manner allowing for a whole institution approach to policy making.
2. Share the values and principle that underpin sustainable development
3. Promote critical thinking, problem solving and action, all of which develop confidence in address in the challenges to sustainable development
4. Allow learners to participate in decision making on the design and content of education programs

The above goals could be achieved through social studies education as one of such learning experiences.

Brief History of Sustainable Development

Different paradigms of development are being given consideration globally and one of such paradigms is sustainable development. At the Stockholm Conferences which took place at Rio, it was pointed out that higher standard of living must be achieved without disposing nature of its beauty, freshness and purity which are essential to man's living. At the world charter for nature which took place in 1982, principles by which all human conduct affecting nature is to be assessed was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The 1992 Earth summit which took place at Rio, places the concept of sustainable development on global and national policy agenda. The desire for a more peaceful prosperous and just world promoted world leaders to come together in September 2002 in



demonstration of a collective responsibility to work together towards the realization of the desire for more peaceful, prosperous and just world, and to strengthen the interdependent and mutually reinforcing the three pillars of sustainable development at the local, national, regional and international levels. This led to the launching of the global vision of the Millennium Development Goals. The Adoption of MDG's represented a major shift in galvanizing major political will for poverty eradication. The Rio+ 20 document set out a mandate to develop sustainable development goals. The Rio outcome gave the mandate that sustainable development goals should not only be coherent but should be integrated into the United Nation Development Agenda. There is now a transition to an agenda which embraces the three dimensions of sustainable development while still ensuring that poverty eradication is its highest priority and the extreme poverty is ended within a generation.

Goal 8 of the proposed sustainable development goals is to promote sustained inclusive and sustainable economic growth full and productive employment and decent work for all. This includes sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and in particular per GDP growth in the least developed countries achieve higher levels of productivity of economics through diversification technological upgrading and innovation through a focus of high value added and labour intensive sector, the promotion of development oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation entrepreneurship and innovation and the encouragement of formalization of growth of micro-small and medium sized enterprises including access to financial services. Improve progressively through 2030 global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavor economic growth from environmental degradation in accordance with the 10years frame work of programmes on sustainable consumption and production with developed countries taking the lead, by 2030 achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men including young persons with disabilities and equal pay for work of equal value, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training by 2020 take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst form of forced labour and end child labour in all its forms including recruitment and use of child soldiers by 2025. Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers particularly women migrants and those in precarious employment; devise and



implement policies to promote sustainable tourism which create jobs, promote local cultural products by 2030. Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and to expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all, increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries particularly LDCs, including through the Enhanced Inter-framework for LDCs and develop and operationalized a global strategy for youth employment and implement the ILO global Job by 2020.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable development is the path way to the future. This is the only framework that can bring together the full range of human aspirations and needs. Nigeria needs to adopt sustainable development strategies if she is not to be left behind in the era of sustainable revolution. Sustainable development enables, by the integration of economic growth social justice and environmental stewardship must be made the global guiding principle and operational standards.

The paper has attempted to appraise Social Studies education contributions to national development. Based on the foregoing that national development does not occur through good policies on paper alone but also requires the prosper implementation of well articulated educational goals.

This study has offered insight into how people think about and integrate education into their everyday and long term concerns and into their ideas and attitudes towards national development. In this paper, we learned through the literature presented in this study has presented suggests that education can be used for sustainable national development.

The relationship between Social Studies education and national development inform us that education has a strong hold national development that component parts of education feed into the desire and ability of a nation to pursue growth and development. It is not simply enough to build more schools; the state must also provide high quality education programmes part of the provision of such programmes include acknowledging the personal challenges to education attainment faced by the majority of the population, poverty, hunger, disease, insecurity, socio-gender parity and political inequalities. While



education can help to overcome these challenges, an awareness of the very real limitations they pose must be part of the education programme development process.

This academic piece is to inform education researchers, education planners, policy makers and curriculum developers of this relationship and the advantages of taking an interactive approach to education. This research conceptualizes the challenges and obstacles currently facing education in Nigeria and offers for overcoming these challenges. In addition the academic community will find this paper a useful addition to existing study on education and the need for improvements in education to ensure broader societal and national development.

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