
**RETHINKING THE PHILOSOPHY OF NIGERIAN
EDUCATION: PRIORITIZING SOCIAL STUDIES FOR
TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract

This paper looked at education which is seen not as a mere means of acquiring a way of living and good citizenship but as well as an essential investment per excellence for societal transformation, social change and technological development which is very synonymous with national development. It is worthy to state that a country's philosophy of education is a holistic blue print that provides the necessary framework and guidelines designed to adequately achieve the vision and goals of such country. Rethinking Nigeria's philosophy of education is thinking again but in a more careful and critical way our educational beliefs for the purpose of understanding the issues; make value judgments and addressing the challenging hindrances' to our quest for development. However, since Social Studies is an integral course of study which is aimed to instill self-awareness and civic knowledge, prioritizing this subject area is key to societal transformation and technological development. This task

is very timely especially considering our inability to attain any appreciable technological progress.

Keywords: Rethinking, Education, Philosophy of education, Social Studies, Technological development.

Introduction

It is not out of place to from time to time in prominent educational conferences appraise the Nigerian Philosophy of Education. Since education as suggested by many experts such as Walter Rodney is the most viable tool for the preservation of the lives of a people as well as cogent instrument of growth and national development for every society. Education is also a means for the maintenance of the social structure of a state and it is the sector that services and sustains the other sectors. So, the need to evaluate and rethink very critically and scrupulously the philosophy and goals of a nation's philosophy of education should as a matter of necessity attract paramount interest and attention especially at this material point in time. This is apt and timely.

Social Studies according to Section 19(c) and 24(a) of the National Policy on Education (2013) is a significant subject area that should be compulsorily taught to all primary and junior secondary school students' because of its immense value of instilling attitudinal and intellectual worth in learners and at the same transform their reasoning and critical thinking abilities thereby enhancing their innate and creative skills capable of initiating technological awareness in them leading to technological development in our society.

Nigeria is a country that is faced with a myriad of challenges such as insecurity, hunger, poverty, corruption in large scale, inflation, unemployment, infrastructural decay, religious crisis and so many. The theme of Sosan 38th National Conference, 2022 "Rethinking Social Studies for New World" is a right step in the right direction towards addressing some of these problems and at the same time fast track meaningful and appreciable progress in the country as we desire to set Nigeria on the part of progress to

meet up with its compatriots thereby given rise to technological development which is akin to national development.

It is against this background that this paper explored the need to prioritize the teaching of Social Studies in schools since the subject has what it takes to contribute to the advancement of creativity and technology in our society; without it man may not really appreciate the world we live in. The subject encourages students to open their minds as they interact with one another and with their environment. It equally figured out their place and roles as members of a larger society thereby contributing to the technological development of their respective societies.

Conceptual Clarifications

In the word of Mono, Shinga and Podos (2020) thinking is what we do every day or time to make meaning of our lives and world. This ability enables us to address the daunting problems that come our way in the process of carrying on with our daily activities. This is done when we make intelligent decisions, as we strive to achieve our goals and at the same time give our lives vision, purpose and fulfillment. This has to do with the process of using our attention to conceptualize and understand issues in an informed manner. So, rethinking according to Chaffee (2020) means critical and careful reflection analyzing the way to remove and re-examine the meaning so as to evaluate choices and arrive at more in-depth decisions. He added that, it has to do with our ability to reflect again on what we are considering, doing or feeling. By careful thinking, an individual is capable of making better or informed conclusion on what he/she has been considering. No wonder, it is said that “the quality of a nation’s thinking determines the quality of life that nation”.

Mono *et al* (2020) states that rethinking is thinking again about a situation so that one can clarify and improve on it. The reason is to develop it to the fullest extent possible. In most cases, rethinking which is the act of thinking again is done carefully in order to change or improve on what has been. This is achieved after a careful and profound meditation which results in more information available thereby reconsidering the idea, plan, document or conclusion so as

to make it perfect and ideal.

Philosophy of Education according to Akinpelu (2005), the term is both vague and ambiguous; vague in the sense that it has no clear cut or precise boundaries of correct usage, and univocally. So, it may not be easy for one to understand the context of the speaker's usage. Mono *et al* (2020) states that philosophy of education refers to the essential projection of a society to education. That is, a policy consciously formulated after taking into consideration the ideal society that we would like to have using education as the main instrument or mechanism for the attainment of this lofty objective. This implies that we are not referring to the discipline called philosophy of Education studied in the University.

With the above submission, the need for every country to initiate and possess an articulate, clear, concise and unambiguous educational philosophy designed for the purpose of achieving an ideal state is paramount. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) Section (4) states that: education is a very power tool or mechanism for the advancement of society which also serves as a means of socialization of individuals. Education nurtures and grow persons in a society, for their interest for the interest of the larger society. All Nigerian children have rights to accessible education as normal learners or learners with special needs. Ability shall determine how far a learner can go in learning. Our education system shall be functional and dynamic to fast-track progress, encourage unity of the country. Therefore, learning activities shall be useful practical understanding so that interest and ability shall guide the learner's direction.

To add, the aims above look beautiful and attractive on paper but in practical terms have not been able to meet Nigeria's needs and the dynamics of our changing global world. Part of the reasons for this failure Walter Rodney argues is that the kind of education we inherited from the colonial master was modeled to produce citizens who are depended on government, not resourceful, not responsive to the changing world. It was not designed to accommodate rapid, modern, scientific and technological development as well as the innovation and advancement of the continent called Africa. That is why the products of our school systems become foreigners in their own land simply because our

education was not oriented towards national consciousness, ethnic and values of the nation, black men and women with foreign culture, dispositions and tastes, misfits and participated gladly in plundering away the resources of their own nations.

Akinpelu corroborated Rodney's view by stating that the Nigerian philosophy of education is more or less a purple patch in which the English and the American philosophies compete for prominence (Akinpelu, 2005). This means that our philosophy of education was bestowed on us by the colonial powers or by several teams of foreign experts but not our own creation. Awokoya (2002) observes that, it is naïve to expect the British that had place the West Africa colonies at the periphery of her economic enterprises a source of raw materials and market for her industrial products to design an educational philosophy that would lead to economic independent and technological development.

Ezeigwe (1999) warns that as long as education remains tied to the sheer acquisition of sterile knowledge without much emphasizes on the application of practical and functional knowledge, we would continue to fail. There seems to have been misplaced emphasis in the philosophy and educational priority of Nigeria. The philosophy of Nigerian education is supposed to develop and take shape in response to the many distinct and diverse needs and demands from the society that establishes it. Education not only changes with time; it is sensitive to place as it is to time and needs. It is expected that a nation's educational goal/aim must be dynamic and relevantly progressive since the forces of time are hardest upon those that fail to move with them.

The Need for Social Studies

There are numerous definitions of Social Studies as there are Social Scientists. But most of these definitions are a product of time and space, although, Wesley in Ololobou (1999) of the University of Minnesota was the one who led the movement which culminated into the agreement on our use of the term Social Studies to mean resources and inquiry drawn from other disciplines to serve the teaching needs of students below the senior secondary schools. In

the words of Kissock (2019) Social Studies is a discipline of learning that a country adopts and employs to educate young learners with the attitudes, skills, knowledge and activities that it needs and values which affect the interdependence of people in their environment. So when we talk about SS we mean the field of study that is well structured which focuses on examining the relationship between man and his physical and social environment. It teaches knowledge, understanding, working ability, ethics and attitudes required for the production of useful citizens.

One can safely say therefore, that the area of study called Social studies draws its content from various fields of academic areas such as anthropology, human, ties Social Sciences and others to encourage democratic and civil participation in the affairs of a country. Within its approach of learning, the discipline gives coordinated, effective study, relying on history, economics, geography, and the humanities for its broad content. Significantly, another aim of discipline is to equip learners with the strength necessary for the growth and advancement of their societies and the world in general as members of a global diverse and interdependent world. Ebrim and Uzoegba (2011) corroborates this view by adding that,

Social Studies means an inter-disciplinary study of man together with his interrelations with both his physical and social and environment, hence, it is generally defined to mean the evaluation of how man interact with in environment. It focuses attention on how man controls the factors of his environment and how these factors influence him in turn. He added, that, Social Studies goal is to provide learners with, virtues, attitudes, skills, competencies, morals, and critical thinking; so as to relate, interact and participate in building positive virtues in all ramifications thereby enhancing development of society (p. 19).

A deep look at our above definition will reveal that Social Studies is reflectively developmentally poised in content and nature through its integrative nature to instill competence, relevant and effectiveness in students. This is possible through the various themes collection from relevant and related disciplines for the purpose of developing

germane meaning and appeals in our day-to-day interaction with one another to the extent possible that learners build critical thinking skills, reflective abilities in basic processes essential for a purposeful living in the society.

According to Axelle (2021) some of the essential objectives of social studies include to:

Create in both young and old, the adaptive skills to comprehend the dynamics of our changing world and to induce in citizens patriotism, nationalism and forge unity for the progress of the society, equip students with the fundamental values, attitudes and profound knowledge and awareness to become active and vibrant country men and women positioned to contribute their quotas to the growth and development of their respective societies and attitudes and to advance learners reasoning and logical skills in thinking deep and imbibe the culture of honesty, transparency, hard work, responsibility, accountability and civic duties necessary for harmonious living and progress.

The Role of Social Studies in Technological Development of Nigeria

Some scholars may argue that Social Studies does not have direct connection to trigger technological development due to the fact that it is not a purely science oriented discipline. But that is not true, social studies talks about knowledge and knowledge is technology. There is no technology without knowledge. After Russia arrived in space (launched Sputnik 1) manned by Yuri Gagarin, who landed in the space safely returned back to cosmos, that social studies as an important school subject began to attract serious attention in the USA. This technological engineering feat so astounded the Americans and even ostensibly dwarfed their technological advancement that the country decided to review its school curriculum where Social Studies was sufficiently prioritized (Ebirim & Uzoegba, 2011). With this, Nigeria can emulate the Britain and American in this area as these are the two most prominent countries in the world and which Nigeria draws its curriculum from.

It is worthy of note here that Social Studies contributed significantly in aiding the developmental stride achieved by both countries in the area of science and technology. Secondly, the integrative nature of Social Studies teaches intellectual strength which helps the learner not only to be able to socialize but to also contribute appropriately to the dynamics of life and the changing world. This assist students to be good citizens and at the same time prepare them to learn and contribute their best in the improvement of the society, through acquired skills of analysis of idea and problem solving that are developed by experts in other disciplines it draws from, which encourages the students to develop, learn to ask critical and pertinent questions, make enquiries, examine critical ideas, make objective assessment of situations and events, thereby helping them in technological initiatives leading to development. Thirdly, apart from the fact that one of the aims and objective of the discipline is to assist learners learn and contribute in a number of ways as useful members of the society. It also connects learners with relevant materials and themes from diverse disciplines which equips them to be better readers, writers and learners who are expected to use their knowledge of analysis, critical thinking and creativity with imagination to demonstrate understanding of the relationship between science, technology and society's advancement through impacts they have had.

Conclusion

Time has passed, technology has become the forerunner of society and society has become more reliable on technology for virtually everything. And since it is obvious that the Nigerian educational policy framework is a purple patch which America and British philosophies compete for prominence, the need for us to rethink our philosophy of education paying sufficient attention interest in teaching of SS in order to produce citizens who are creative, innovative, resourceful, responsive to the changing world is now or never. Our education system must be sensitive to time, needs and demands from the society that establishes it, it should also be dynamic and relevantly progressive to fast-track meaningful technological

development to ease stress, address challenges and make life more meaningful and pleasurable.

Suggestions

There is no discipline that is irrelevant and cannot contribute to the technological development of a country if properly studied and utilized. The philosophy and goals of the Nigerian education should be re-shaped to accommodate and emphasize more activities and practical aspects of learning and less of theory so as to meet the expectations of the 21st century Nigeria. More topics, themes, and subjects that are science related be included in the curriculum of Social Studies. This could be done in 3 ways as in; adding to the present curriculum, stretching the current curriculum to accommodate new topics and themes and finally initiating an entirely new curriculum for this task Government should encourage and sponsor learners who have demonstrated ingenuity in creative skills, science and technology. This will motivate more learners to appreciate technology and its penetrating effect on man and national development and embrace it.

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