
**SOCIAL STUDIES AS A VALUABLE TOOL FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The roles of Social Studies in contributing to sustainable development are the focal point of this paper. As a problem solving subject, more attention was given to the objective of Social Studies. The problems of Social Studies in Nigeria, like shortage of instructional materials were also discussed. Future prospect of Social Studies was also addressed and solutions to the problems of Social Studies in Nigeria were discussed. The paper analyzes the connection between Social Studies and sustainable development towards blending and interfacing local wisdom with global knowledge, values and skills, which will develop the young Nigerian to become a citizen of this country as well as a citizen of the global village. It also discussed the concept of sustainable development and its theme which include: National unity, Economic development and Nationalism, The paper pointed out that Social Studies is a vital tool or vehicle for building human capacity for sustainable development in Nigeria. It recommended among others that Social Studies should be accorded high premium in the education system. In this regard, there is need for a thorough review of the Social Studies curriculum and provides a provision for moral inculcation for sustainable

development. Social Studies should focus more on those aspects which are crucial to value inculcation and sustainable development.

Keywords: Social Studies, Sustainable Development, Nigeria

Introduction

Social Studies have been found to have greater effects on individuals who already have higher levels of participation and cognitive resources, which may mitigate the gaps in society. Societies have long had an interest in the ways in which their youth are prepared for citizenship responsibilities and how they learn to participate in civic life. Social Studies is to give students the knowledge, skills, and competencies to be active, informed citizens who can think critically, understand and explain the perspectives of others, make judgments, and communicate ideas effectively. There are lots of evidences that no nation (Nigeria inclusive) has attained the level of understanding and acceptance of the rights and responsibilities among the totality of its citizens that is required for the maintenance and improvement of any constitutional democracy. If citizens are to influence the course of political life and public policies they need to expand their repertoire of participatory skills which include political ethics (Galston, 2001).

Social Studies remains an important means of teaching the populace about individual rights and what duties and responsibilities the governed and leaders should do to facilitate national development. The introduction of Civic Education as a subject to be taught in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria is expected to further deepen democratic culture and encourage qualitative participation of the average Nigerian in the governance process.

Social Studies curriculum addresses young Nigerians in the formative educational years. The contents address issues that are important to developing young Nigerian people into responsible citizens. In other words, the curriculum enables our young people imbibe the values, norms, knowledge, actions and activities of responsible citizen for sustainable development. Social Studies

curriculum is to promote civic competence and help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world (Ojedokun, 2001). Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of further generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development could also be constructed as a global responsibility and solidarity between generations, between women and men and between different cultures and countries (Adesina, 2010). It is about safeguarding and efficient use of the existing natural resources, Investment in management of human, social and physiological resources are also crucial parts of sustainable development.

However, Social Studies is said to be a veritable tool for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues. Social Studies have two goals: Social understanding (i.e, knowledge of human societies) and civic competence (i.e, democratic citizenship).

Social Studies aim at inculcation of values, attitudes and appreciations in the learners, the development of skills like group, social, intellectual and manipulative, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, the development of concepts and generalizations peculiar to Social Studies as a discipline or subject. Citizenship is the hallmark of every promising society; it is a basic requirement for sustainable national development and nationhood. It is on the strength of this that Obama (2009) in his address to American's school children declared that for every society, there must be a clearly articulated framework for responsible citizenship and national development. For Nigeria, this no doubt has been laid down in the National Policy on Education of 2004. The National Policy on Education is anchored on Nigeria's philosophy on education as enunciated through the nation's objectives. Nigeria has five main national objectives as provided by the Second National Development Plan and accepted as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education. They are the building of: A free and democratic society; A just and egalitarian society; A united strong and self-

reliant nation; A great and dynamic economy; and A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (FRN, 1998).

Consequently, there seems to be a strong relationship between civic education and sustainable development. Social Studies are a potent factor for sustainable development, and thus both concepts are seen as monolithic entities placed on a linear relationship with the concept of Social Studies being stronger. It is therefore, capable of affecting sustainable development. It is arguable to say sustainable development is interconnected with national development. The concept of national development touches all the aspects of societal development- political, economic, social, cultural, technological and educational. When talking of Social Studies and sustainable development, it must be clearly stated that Social Studies is a holistic approach to contribute to national development. In this circumstance, Social Studies is identified as a potent instrument that can engineer national development by helping to produce responsible citizens who will maximally contribute to the building of a useful society. When the citizens' capacities and commitments are well developed through the instrumentality of the curriculum, every citizen will become conscious of his or her responsibility to the growth of the nation.

What is the prerequisite to achieve this? There is need for a responsive curriculum that is flexible and dynamic enough to drive the society on the path of growth and development. Such a progressive curriculum must be interdisciplinary in character. Civic Education as an interdisciplinary study is clearly documented in the National Policy on Education and accorded the status of a core subject. This is why Oyetade and Oladiran (2012) noted that the concept of sustainable development has been an age long discourse in all education matters. As education is a human development process, schools are one of the societal institutions that have an active role in helping children and youths learn to live and work in their nation. Hence, it is of great importance that teachers make their classroom attractive places where children feel secured, such that their lives are given a respectful hearing, and where they know that knowledge will be impacted. There should be daily occasions to ask pupils what they think, how a proposed problem is to be

solved, what features they think should be located in a class-constructed map, and so on. In such a classroom environment, the meaning of involvement is shared learning where good will and mutual respect are observed and experienced. Since children learn how they live, and since we want children to learn satisfactions of participatory approach, we should look for concrete ways in which pupils have better- than- even chance of influencing policy, where civic sensitivity and responsibility are nurtured, and children tend to develop a feeling of loyalty and protectiveness. This sometimes expresses itself in surprising rewarding ways.

The drive towards re-engineering the process of teaching and learning Social Studies in our primary and secondary schools has become very imperative especially in the face of awakening national consciousness and promoting sustainable development. It becomes painful that lack of patriotic orientation had led to disorientation in schools and the larger society. Most of the present high ranking elites missed the opportunity to learn basic democratic values and they are the present national leaders. The consequences were being felt at all strata of our society. Recent occurrences have indicated that Nigeria is on the brink of losing its national images and character. The prevalent trend of corruption, indiscipline, disrespect for both elders and the rule of law and non-committal to duty and so on are some of the manifestations of negative values in the Nigerian society. This calls for urgent value re-orientation because of their far-reaching impact on sustainable development.

Acquiring knowledge and skills have become essential for an informed, efficient and responsible. Today, more than ever before, young people need to understand how democracy works and how they can help to keep it and improve it. Social Studies has become one of the central objectives in many schools, especially in the context of promoting interdisciplinary and practice-oriented projects, making Social Studies not merely a school subject but a way of life. The foregoing assertion therefore clearly suggests that acquisition of the knowledge of Social Studies is a vital tool for sustainable development in Nigeria.

In spite of all the benefits that may accrue from Social Studies as stated earlier, it is worth mentioning that Social Studies has not

been fully accorded its prime objectives in transforming the society. Thus, the ingredients for Social Studies in the curriculum have failed to enable students to develop an understanding of their societal values and knowledge for sustainable development, Iheoma (1985) explained why school subjects have perhaps not achieved the aims of transmitting moral and societal values in the youths. He stated that the current methods and techniques adopted for moral education in Nigerian schools are inadequate to cope with moral crises in the society. Jekayinfa (1999) noticed that non-involvement of the curriculum in senior secondary level hinders the full achievement of the aims and objectives of Social Studies towards achieving sustainable development and preparing the learners to be humane, rational, skilful in decision making, and participating and responsible citizens in a world that is becoming complex and interdependent.

Purpose of the Study

This study explored the contributions of Social Studies for sustainable development in Nigeria and it important to understand how their teaching impacts upon the day to day lives of Nigerians and whether common concepts are instilled in students. The specific objectives are;

- i. To identify the major role of Social Studies for sustainable development.
- ii. To examine if there are any challenges facing Social Studies teachers in delivering Social Studies curriculum content appropriately.
- iii. To examine whether there is adequate content in the Social Studies curriculum that can help to resolve issues that challenge social cohesion in Nigeria.

Concept of Social Studies

Social Studies as a subject in our primary and post primary schools are an answer to societal and national problems. It is a problem-oriented discipline in which man studies and learns about problems of survival in his environment. It is a study of how man influences his environment and in turn, is influenced by his multifarious

environment. Ololobou (1989) conceptualized Social Studies as “an organized, integrated study of man and his environment, both physical and social emphasizing on cognition, functional skills and desirable attitudes and actions for the purpose of producing an effective citizenry” moreover, it is not only a study, but also a way of life geared towards the problem of the society so that adequate actions could be taken to create a better society.

Kissock (1981) justified that Social Studies is used in Nigeria to inculcate the concept of nationalism, unity and dependence among a diverse citizenry. It is through Social Studies that individuals are trained to acquire knowledge, useful skills, desirable values, attitudes and habits to adjust themselves to the condition of the world in which they live. According to Kissock (1981) Social Studies is a program of study which a society uses to instill in the students the knowledge, skills, attitudes and action it considers important concerning the relationship human beings have with each other, their world and themselves. Social Studies emphasize the importance of man as he/she interacts, influences and relates to the different environment for productive and happy citizenship. Dubey (1980) visualized Social Studies as “The investigation of human activity” it studies man at home, at work, at worship, in politics, at play, in the village, in the nation, everywhere, engaged in his busy program of living. Social Studies is particularly interested in man’s problems about which decisions must be made

The objectives of Nigerian Social Studies, which are developed to reflect the spirit of Nigerian philosophy of education, lay emphasis on the integration of Nigerian citizens into sound and effect citizens. The national educational aims and objectives from which Social Studies objectives are drawn are stated in the National Policy on Education (1998).

Theoretical Framework

Effective implementation of Social Studies provides a philosophical and structural framework on which to base the teaching of skills and strategies that reinforce reasoned decision- making skills, evaluation of information, practical application of civic virtue, and an in-depth understanding of citizenship responsibility (Kidwell,

2005). A USAID study in 2002 discovered that Social Studies program have an enormous and positive impact on learners in comprehending and practicing key aspects of democratic behaviours and attitudes. The report claims that Social Studies help students to know and identify public policy and increase their political participation through exploring and studying local problems. “It also leads to more moderate, but still significant, differences in participants’ knowledge about their political system and about democratic structures” Gosa. (2014). This is why Levin (1989) postulates that “The theory of sustainable development is predicted on awareness that a society can increase its national output, or an individual can increase his or her income, by investing in either physical capital (e.g. a plant and equipment, to increase productivity) or in human capital (e.g. educational and health, which also increases human productivity) (p.14)”. Furthermore, explaining the use of schooling as a sorting model, in hiring decisions, of unobserved differences in productivity, defines human capital Theory as that which “is concerned with the role of earning in determining the returns to schooling” (p.34).

Blundell, Dearden, Meghir and Sianesi (1999) perceive education as a formation in human capital from the perspective similar to the decision which business leaders make to build and strengthen their work force. Human capital theory is more of an economic theory, but in regard to education Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) maintain that, “the development of skills is an important factor in production activity” (p.479). Therefore, potentially, the provision of education will help in the acquisition of sustainable development skills (Lochner, 2004). Psacharopoulos (2006), submitted that the citizenry and their living standards are improved Similarly, Sweetland (1996) wrote that Individuals and societies have some economic benefits from their investments in people. Based on the views of these authors, one might ask whether human capital theory is appropriate for this study because the purpose of the study is not primarily about or limited to economic yield, but that of a general orientation for individuals to contribute to sustainable development. Scholars like Livingstone (1997). Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2004) see this as a limitation in the

use of this theory solely to explain measureable wage gains from any increased unit of education.

Concept of Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development emerged as a response to a growing concern about human society's impact on the natural environment. The concept of sustainable development was defined in 1987 by the Brundtland commission (formally the world commission on environment and development) as development that meets the need of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Development may be necessary to meet human needs and improve the quality of life; it must happen without depleting the capacity of the natural environment to meet present and future needs. The sustainable development movement has grown and campaigned on the basis that sustainable protects both interests of future generations and the earth's capacity to regenerate. At first, it emphasized the environment in development policies but, since 2002, has evolved to encompass social justice and the fight against poverty as key principles of sustainable development.

There are two various aspects of sustainable development indices: that is, economy, society and environment. We can see the economy embedded in society, which in turn is embedded in the environment. The later focuses on the central role that the environment plays in human society and in turn in the economy.

Sustainable development is a development that manages all assets, natural resources and human resources as well as financial and physical assets for increasing long term wealth and well-being. As a goal, sustainable development rejects policies and practices that support current standards by depleting the productive base, including natural resources and that which leaves future generations with proper prospects and greater risks than our own. Ahmed (1989) submitted that applying the principles of sustainability can save individuals, corporations and government money while benefitting the environment.

Bankole (2002) affirms that it is of critical importance that the governments of nations take serious steps towards developing action

plans and measurable targets in the five critical issues the world summit on sustainable development (WSSD) in 2002 addressed. They are, water and sanitation, energy, agricultural productivity, biodiversity and ecosystem management and health.

Uwejamamere (2001) acknowledges that sustainable development is a trans-boundary and multidimensional endeavour inter-linking virtually all sectors of the national economy and he however, observed that the greatest challenge to Nigerian's sustainable development effort is energy development efficiency and consumption. Sustainable development has been variously conceived in terms of vision expression (Lee, 1993), value change (Clark, 1989), social reorganization (Gore, 1992) or transformational process (Viederman, 1994) towards a desired future or better world. The core idea was defined most influentially by the World Commission on Environment and Development (i.e. The Brundtland Commission) as "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (1987: 8). In its broadcast sense, this normative abstraction has been widely accepted and endorsed by thousands of governmental, corporate, and other organizations worldwide (Gladwin & Krause, in Press (1995).

The basic principles underlying sustainable development can be separated into a social, economic, and ecological dimensions. The economic growth is seen as a requirement for development. No country can achieve a sustainable economic growth if the environment is not conducive and encouraging, if the prosperity is not fairly distributed and if growth of the human resources has not taken place. Therefore, the economic dimension means that economic growth shall carry on with: first, respect for the environment, Second, growth of the people's health and education and third, a fair distribution of prosperity. The social dimension points out the importance resources power and influence to be fairly distributed and that people can feel secured and can participate. The social dimension is therefore a requirement for economic growth. The environmental dimension means that considerations are taken for the social and economic development. These three dimensions are integrated with each other as they are interdependent and

mutually reinforcing. The implication of this is that sustainable development to a large extent is about politics (Tilbury & Wortman, 2004).

Effectiveness of Social Studies for Sustainable Development

Arnold, a headmaster of Rugby school in Great Britain in 1930 identified the need for an education that would provide a kind of moral code and to prepare young children to fit and cope with the growing industrial society (Simon, 1994). This brought the introduction of programme in British schools called “school and life” which taught the children their interrelationships with the environment such as the home, school and the entire society (Chitty, 1992). Edgar (1938) was the first man to use the term “Social Studies” for pedagogical purposes in the United States of America after the depression years and the appearance of the Soviet sputnik. To him, the new Social Studies was a programme meant to lead the boys and girls to find excitement and motivation in the process of social education via exploration, inquiry and discovery but with the emphasis on developing competencies, values and attitude essential for a citizen in a free society. Social Studies has evolved to prepare young Americans for future wars and to promote the spirit of nationalism, patriotism and loyalty to sensitize the youth on the concepts of self-reliance in food, resources’ conservation and increased productivity. Jarolimek (1977) viewed Social Studies as a subject that concerns itself with learning about people, how and where they live, how they form and structure societies, how they govern themselves and provide for their material and psychological needs, how and why they love and misuse the resources of the planet (Earth) which is their home.

Interconnection between Social Studies and Sustainable Development

Social Studies consolidate social fabrics and galvanizes relations each other for common courses. Through Social Studies, an individual becomes sensible and a disciplined member of their communities. This ultimately promotes good governance and

national development. Beyond political reason, the importance of Social Studies has been recognized in economic status quo of Nigeria. According to Olaitan (2013) economy of the nation is based on three components namely- state, private sector and cooperatives. If the economy fails to support politics, there will be a dearth of participation that ultimately affects democracy, human dignity and values. Thus, the country's politics has become more capital-centric. Politics, guide economic activities and economic activities are the bedrock politics. Without Social Studies, people cannot realize the essence of politics. Social Studies teach people to be responsible and dutiful. Social Studies teach citizens to be good citizen. Indeed, this is a catalyst to development.

Similarly, Obasanjo (2007) in his farewell broadcast presented this challenge: We have set for ourselves ambitious targets that will make us one of the largest economies in the world by the year 2020. It is attainable and achievable but if we divert from the part of economic prudence, reform and realities, we can miss the road. Then the year 2020 will be a mirage. To buttress the above, Nwachukwu (2007) summed in this way: "Putting Nigeria education in a more responsive shape in order to plant the nation and its continent, Africa, on the map will need a whole lot of initiatives for new realities in paradigm creations- Education is the pivot of expected Millennium nation transformation (P53-54)" As to the responsiveness of curriculum in order to address the challenges of sustainable development, Emah (2009) observed that such a curriculum takes cognizance of vital changes and challenges in "The environment and prepares the learners to meet them". Such a curriculum addresses their learning differences. The author concluded that in today's world, a responsive curriculum is that which equip the learner for development in information, communications and technology (ICT); local and global challenges of ensuring peace and resolving conflicts, health concerns and myriads of social, economic and political demands that confront individuals and the entire society on daily basis.

The current trend of Social Studies is well responsive enough to equip student with requisite skills that will make them function

effectively and contribute productively to the growth and development of the society in a sustainable manner

Conclusion

From the foregoing, evidently there is a compelling relationship between Social Studies and sustainable development. That is why Social Studies is identified as a potent force in the pursuit of development challenges. This paper argued for the use of Social Studies as a realistic platform for the production of responsible citizens who will contribute positively towards a country's quest for sustainable development. In meeting the challenges of sustainable development, Social Studies has the capacity to perform its mission of promoting an education culture that stimulates civic competence, critical thinking skills, articulate, analyze and proffer solutions to complex socio-economic and political issues of state policies.

Social Studies therefore represents educators' pedagogical paradigm shift that enhances thinking about what is expected to mould future citizens who are endowed with self-sustaining skills and talent emerging in productive activities that will contribute to sustainable development. It could be affirmed that responsible citizenship is the hallmark of any national development efforts. In this wise, the paper emphasizes the grooming of right citizens for the future as duty duly claimed by Social Studies because it is a nation-building course. If the citizens are therefore identified as instrument to pursue development, it is therefore recommended that Social Studies Curriculum contents should be strengthened to be seen as a catalyst for the development of individual and national development in order to ensure sustainable development for all.

Way Forward

Having discussed the nexus between Social Studies and sustainable development in Nigeria, the paper recommends functional Social Studies content which will train the individual for a better appreciation of his own cultural traditions whilst at the same time equipping him with the ability to absorb new ideas, new information and new data for resolving the constantly changing problems of his environment. This will lead to individual development and

consequently promote national development. In addition Social Studies should be taught to redefine our national priority in favour of hard-work, diligence, honesty and patriotism. So long as people make it because of their connections, so long as tribe and old school ties are the basics for progress in public service, so long will all the talk about sustainable development be mere talk. Social Studies teaches all and sundry to contribute greatly to the success of national economy. Social Studies should be properly entrenched in our school curriculum to promote political structure that would promote harmonious living and sustainable development.

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