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Social Studies Education in the 21st Century, a Tool for Fighting Corruption in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper attempts to examine the bases of social studies in the 21st century focusing on the concepts of objectives of social studies education, goals of social studies education. It also emphasize the social relevance of social studies education in which case it addresses the social needs, social realities and social aspiration of Nigerians. The thrust of the paper is that corruption and indiscipline exemplified in social and political vices constitute obstacles for integrated national development, and that social studies as a subject has a role to play in charting the way forward for a disciplined and better society. Specifically, it deals on the social studies as a tool for fighting corruption in Nigeria which is as a result of identified as value conflict, destabilized and failing nation because of numerous political and social vices prevalent in the system. Conclusively, an individual exposed to social studies content is giving a positive orientation which will ultimately prepare him or her to function effectively in the society. Social studies would checkmate the rising spate of corruption in our society. Social studies is an indispensable veritable tools for fighting corruption in Nigeria.

Introduction

It is a truism that Nigeria has lost its pride of place among the comity of nations in spite of her rich human capital development and abundant natural resources. Indeed, Nigeria is still described as a destabilized and failing nation because of the numerous political and social vices prevalent in the system. In fact, Nigeria is experiencing systematic failure in political, social economic and technological aspects of the nation's life; no doubt, the nation is plagued by political instability, porous border, flagrant disregard for the rule of law, sectarian violence, advance free fraud – 419, militancy, terrorism endemic corruption, electoral violence and thuggery.

Furthermore, there is high rate of unemployment, poverty, hunger and insecurity that have enveloped the whole strata of the economic and political terrain due to deliberate human greed, inordinate ambition of leaders and “winner takes all” approach. Little wonder, Transparency International (2009) rated Nigeria as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Nigeria's ranking dropped from 121st position in 2008 index to 130th position with a corruption perception index of 2.5 from 2.7 and confidence range of 2.3 to 2.2 by implication, corruption is waxing stronger despite the involvement of several federal agencies in the war against corrupt such as economic and financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). In the same year, America classified Nigeria as a “security risk state” and a “terror prone nation” along with fourteen other countries namely Yemen, Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Libya, Afghanistan, etc. when Umar Farouk Abdul Mutillaba, a 23 years old Nigerian based in London attempted to bomb a US bound aircraft to Detroit. Similarly, sectarian violence reared its ugly head in Jos recently where lives and property were lost in an ethno-religious crisis. The thrust of this paper is that corruption exemplified in social and political vices constitutes obstacles to integrated national development; and that social studies as a subject has a role to play in charting the way forward for a disciplined and better society.

Corruption has been identified as one of h greatest challenges in pursuing national development. It is a deviation from the set down moral standards to hold society together and these are truth, rectitude, honesty, discipline, right attitude to work, courage, national consciousness (Ighovojah, 1998). The more society holds on to these norms and values, the stronger it is and the more it deviates from them, the weaker it becomes. These norms and values

are the bedrock of society. If the citizens of this country are honest, pure-and full of integrity in the performance of their duties or obligations as status holders, corruption may not have destroyed us the way it has. Unfortunately, people have come to see corruption as a normal way of life and it exists in both the public and private sectors of the economy and even in our private lives. Corruption has been so much practiced in Nigeria that it appears to be an official policy in public and private transactions. It involves, president, vice presidents, Senate Leadership, speakers, members of the National and State Assemblies, Ministers, Judiciary, governors, Deputy Governors, Commissioners, Heads of Departments and Agencies, Local Government Chairmen, Councillors, civil Servants, among others. It involves both the high and the low and covers all areas of life. Radio and television stations, papers and magazines are awash with stories about corruption manifesting in cases of illegal acquisition of wealth through public offices, misappropriation of public funds, profiteering, gratification and all manners of bribe.

Corruption challenges

The greater part of the problem facing the nation is corruption, which contributes to poor governance, socio-political and economic problems. Corruption has, among other been defined as an act of “requesting, offering, giving or accepting directly or indirectly a bribe or any other undue advantage or the prospect thereof, which distorts the proper performance of any duty or behaviour required of the recipient of the bribe, the undue advantage of the prospect thereof”. Unfortunately, after years of independence, Nigeria still harbour the mentality that public money belongs to no one and that any person who has access to it should convert it into his or her personal use. The corrupt product of the leaders prevents the society from putting its abundant material and human resources into effective use. In an article “Oil giant that runs on grease of politics,” Nigeria was described as a rich nation floating on oil wealth “but almost none of it flows to the people” (San Francisco Chronicle, March 11, 2007).

Corruption as barrier to integrated national development

Nigeria as a nation is characterized by fiscal rascality, misplaced priorities, irresponsible leadership, endemic corruption, poor work ethics, and exploitation/extortion. Mkpa (1999) noted that mediocrity, nepotism and tribalism thrive at the altar of merit. He further observed that some individuals are wealthier than certain countries in Africa, and the amount tucked away by few persons in foreign bank accounts are far greater than the

national budgets of a few nations put together. Supporting this view, Okaba (2009) observed that Nigerian as a nation is not developing even though there is an increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), from 5.98% in 2008 – 6.9% in 2009, see table 1

Table 1: Nigeria's Growth Rate 2000 – 2009

Year	Growth Rate
2000	3.8
2001	3.9
2002	5.0
2003	0.2
2004	8.1
2005	4.8
2006	6.8
2007	5.5
2008	5.98
2009	6.9

Source: Compiled from data obtained the CBN

Perhaps, only a few individuals are reaping the benefit of our oil rich country- because of corruption, hence Lewis (2009) concluded that corruption is the bane of our society. He stated that corrupt leaders copy or establish corrupt institutions and corrupt institutions create a multiple corrupt system. There is hardly any system that is corruption-free in Nigeria. The society is interested in not how you make it but that have made it.

Politically, Nigeria is drift. Politics is branded the easiest way of amassing wealth, hence the increase in politically motivated assassination. According to Osakwe (2009), there were 39 cases of political assassinations in 1999, 17 between 2002 and 2003, 9 between 2005-2007. he noted that these years were pre-election and election years. Furthermore, during these years, thuggery and electoral violence were rampant. Loss of lives and property are order of the day, while there is a flagrant disobedience to the rule of law by all, including the government.

Once again the energy crisis continues to rear its ugly head due to gross indiscipline experienced in that sector. The 6,000 megawatts of electricity promised Nigerians by December 2009 turned out to be a mirage in spite of the need for adequate energy in the industrial sector. The stakeholders keep

trading blames. However, some of the challenges identified as obstacles to the realization of their target border on issues of indiscipline these include lack of planning and management, insufficient gas supply as a result vandalism and militarization of the Niger Delta Region, what then is the way forward? In this discourse, social studies serves as a veritable tool and catalytic agent for attaining national goals and sharpening society. Specifically, through the teaching of social studies, students will engage in independent thinking, weight evidence, and evaluate facts and ideas to form sound judgement. Also, social Studies students would be guide to shun social vices as cultism, examination malpractice, indecent dressing, corruption through emphasis on core components of civic and value education.

The concept and objectives of teaching social studies

Definition varies according to situations, aspirations and expectation of the people.

A very careful look at the analysis of the definition of social studies education in educational literature simply shows that social studies education has been defined in the following ways Udoh (1993) express social studies education as an integrative field of study which probes man's symbiotic relationships with his environments, endow man with the reflective or contemplative capacities, intellectual, affective, social and work skills to enable him understands his world and its problems, and to rationally solve or cope with them living in the society. Mezieobi (1992) define Social Studies education as a citizenship education; as a vehicle for human skill development, as ecological studies and as a value laden field of study. In view of the fact that Social Studies education contents are learners activity – packed involving the near -0 total control of the learning situation by the learner in his do- it- yourself emphasis, invariably, Social Studies education de-emphasizes teacher's control of the teaching – learning process. Social studies education is learner – centric or learner – controlled. The professional Social Studies education teacher functions principally as “a facilitator of learning, rather than a dispenser of knowledge (Gleeson and whitty, 1976). On the other hand Osakwe and Itedjere (1993) stated that social studies education is an integrated and interdisciplinary field of study whose ultimate aim is to produce people who are civically component.

Olobobou (1992) illustrated Social Studies education is a programme of study in which clients are exposed to carefully selected physical and social environment realities, with an in-built package for the development of skills

of various kinds and nurturing of values, attitude and actions conducive to the continued orderly survival of the society. Social studies education is an integrated body of knowledge formulated to equip the learner with significant values, attitudes, skills and knowledge in order to be productively functional in the society. In acceptance, Imogie (1993) stressed "... it is the particular responsibility of social studies education instruction to provide citizenship education to the young stars. Social studies education is a value laden instruction, which relates citizen obligations and duties to the state. It is a process of integrating the citizens with national policies, economic, social and technological values.

In America, social studies is defined as citizenship education which prepares individuals to live cooperatively with one another, appreciate one's culture, and have a thorough knowledge of existing norms, structure, and privileges. In another development, Barths and Sharmis 1981 defined social studies as synonymous with the social sciences. Relatively Ogunsanya (1984) opined that social studies is a synthesis of relevant components of subjects in the social science, such as economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, history, archaeology, geography, religion, pure and applied sciences, health education, which are integrated to form its concepts as well as promote easy adaptation to societal changes. Hence OSakwe and Itedjere (1993) in their opinion noted that social studies is the interpretation of interrelationship of different subject aimed at inculcating national consciousness and national unity, imbibing the right types of values and attitude for self and inculcating the necessary skills, abilities and competencies for the individual and the larger society. Even though there may be no consensus as regards the definition of social studies, the goals and objectives of social studies are similar. Orubu (1984), Mansaray (1991), and Dike (2002) classified into three broad groups the objectives of social studies these include:

- i) **Knowledge and understanding:** Of basic facts of the physical, social and political environment. This also deals with information n rule of law, democratization process, unity in diversity and sustainable development.
- ii) **Acquisition of basic skills and aptitudes:** Necessary fro critical thinking: analyzing information, expressing opinions and ultimately reaching sound judgement.

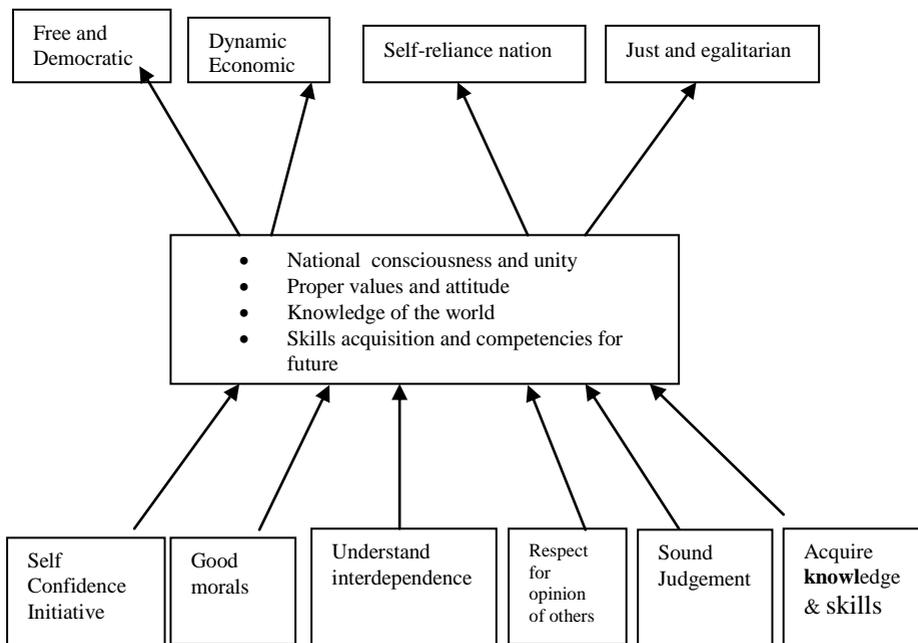
- iii) **Development of healthy positive attitudes and values:** Such as cooperation, hard work, open-mindedness, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, participation, justice, fairness, tolerance, transparency, courage, etc.

Definitely, these laudable goals and objectives of teaching social studies in our institutions are hinged on the National philosophy of Nigeria and National Goals of Education as stated in (FRN, 2004)

- i) A free and democratic society'
- ii) A just and egalitarian society
- iii) A great and dynamic economy
- iv) A united, strong and self-reliant, nation
- v) A land of full opportunities for all its citizenry.

See the relationship between the education goals as exemplified in figure 1

Fig 1: Relationship between National Goals, Educational Objectives and Social Studies Objectives in Nigeria



Invariably, to achieve these ideas of national development, social studies education would produce detribalized, patriotic, flexible and objective citizens who would be able to adapt to changes in order to suit the prevailing needs and interest of the nation. Thus, social studies education helps in three critical areas of values oriented education, Civic Education and Environmental Education.

Curbing corruption via social studies education

In order to ensure a developed society devoid of social studies education must be a course of study at all levels of our educational system and emphasis should be placed on the following critical component areas.

- i. Civic and political education:** In political Development, the emphasis is on the degree of political civilization that prevails, the equality of democratic principles, the freedom of the people in the governance of states, the freedom of the press. Indeed the quality of leadership and followership is of great essence here among other. Therefore, students would be taught civic rights and obligations, need for active participation in the democratization process, payment of taxes; others include awareness of the spirit of nationalism and patriot is not only one who can lay down his life for his country but also one who pays his taxes promptly, does not engage in bribery and corruption; one who is not a vandal and who shuns violence. In conclusion, social studies, through its civic education programmes can bring leadership, values and attitudes, Nigerian will easily imbibe the culture of discipline as the product of a pragmatic civic education will demonstrate patriotism and reject bad leadership.
- ii. Value Education:** Teach students social studies contents that are value-laden and would promote the inculcation of virtues such as honesty, integration, hard work, contentment, discipline, cooperation, participation, integrity, trustworthiness, open-minded as core values. Definitely, inculcation of such values will promote social, physical economic and spiritual state. Therefore, for them to understand the environment topics such as pollution and climatic chanced will be emphasized.
- iii. Environmental Education:** Social studies education would create an understanding of our evolving social an physical environment as

a whole in its natural, man –made, cultural and spiritual state. Therefore, for them to understand the environment topics such as pollution and climatic change will be emphasized.

Conclusion

Social studies education is vital in all round development of an individual. An individual exposed to social studies content is giving a positive orientation which will ultimately prepare him or her to function effectively in the society. Furthermore, social studies education would checkmate the rising spate of corruption in our society. Conclusively, social studies is an indispensable veritable tool in achieving national development in Nigeria.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are made:

- 1) Development of civic responsibility, patriotic, responsive and citizen participation
- 2) Development of global perspective through and understanding of students' life experience as part of the total human experience, past and present.
- 3) Development of critical understanding of the history, geography and pluralistic nature of the civic institution.
- 4) Development of a multicultural perspective on the world people through an understanding of their differences and commonalities throughout time and place.
- 5) Superficial coverage of content should be replaced with in-depth study of selected topics
- 6) Develop children with the psychological know-how to enable them feel committed to their society.

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