

ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH RESEARCH IN SOCIAL STUDIES

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Abstract

The paper discussed the role of social studies research in advancing sustainable national development. The paper adopted secondary data as sources of information. The concepts of development, national development, sustainable development and research were defined. Social studies research mechanism as well as the role of research in achieving sustainable national development in all human society was discussed. The paper concluded that social studies is recognized as a tool fashioned to accomplish specific goals of the society and so needs research mechanism that will acquaint the learners with those capabilities which are considered desirable. Based on this, suggestions on how to advance sustainable national development through social studies mechanism were made.

Keywords: Research, sustainable national development

Introduction

Development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. A country is classified as developed when it is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry. Development in any society of the world largely depends on the quality of researches in such environment. The world is what it is today because of research. Research is used to establish existing facts, reaffirm the results of previous work, and solve new or existing problems. Result-oriented research is aimed at finding solution to growth and sustainable development of any nation. No developmental effort can succeed without result-oriented, scientific research. For development to be sustained, resource management and usage must be in a manner that meets the needs of the present generation while preserving the environment for the present and future generation.

Conceptual Clarification

Development: Development as a concept is a victim of definitional pluralism. It is a difficult word to define. Be that as it may, erudite scholars have made attempts to conceptualize it. Some of these definitions are explored for the purpose of this study.

Development according to Hornby (2001) is the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced and stronger. Ankil in Bulya (2011: 1) sees development as the autonomous process of growth and change in the society, that is, a process of internal dynamics. Similarly, Nnolin in Buyla (2011: 1) defined development as a process through which a society moves from a given developing socio-economic condition to another more desirable condition as a consequence of education in the appropriate attitudes and skills. Todaro in Onyesom (2005:140-141) states that development implies the multidimensional process involving changes in structure, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty. Going by this definition, development is viewed as a sustained increase in the socio-economic welfare of a population. Todaro went further to identify three basic components or core values of development as: life sustenance, self esteem and freedom.

According to Hornby (2001) development connotes, among other things, "a gradual growth or advancement through progressive change". In effect, the phenomenon of development is gradual and change is positive. In the view of Onyemelukwe in Onyesom (2005:141), development involves the society's transformation through its institutions, organizations, social rules, customary usages and attitude to an extent that makes the society more and more positively responsive to desired modern change.

These definitions of development so far suggest a movement towards improvement. They involve change from an earlier situation to a new and improved situation and cover all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. They highlight the uplifting of the human person by means of the unfolding and realization of the individual creature potentialities enabling him to improve his material living conditions through the use of available resources.

National Development: National development can be seen as the expansion and growth of people in an area of government. It can mean the development of infrastructures such as roads, hospitals, good education, and pipe-borne water, electricity, and health and communication services in the life of a nation.

Olowookere (2012) defined national development as the continuous economic, political and technological improvement of a nation-state, culminating in improved standard of living of its citizens. National development refers to the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political, as well as religious advancement of a country or nation.

Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2012:186) asserted that national development extensively incorporates total activities of man purposefully directed at economic, social, political and technological transformation and reformation of nations aimed at achieving progressive change to be competitively and productively relevant in the globe.

Tadaro (1977), Mezieobi (1994) and Mkpa (1999) in Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2012) conceptualized national development as multi-dimensional, multi-faceted, multi-directed and multi-integrated process. This implies that economic progress or advancement is a primary aspect of national development. They stated further that there are the political, social, cultural, philosophical, psychological and technological dimensions of national development. From the foregoing explanations, Mezieobi et al described national development as an integrated concept of human activities directed at improving the general living styles and social conditions of the citizens and non citizens of a state to an extent granted by the nation's constitutional provisions for the exercise of fundamental human right. Ofiong (1980:3) in Allwell (2011) conceived national development as a structural transformation of the economy, polity, culture and the entire society by permitting the self-generating potential of the people. National development encompasses social and political development. In the same vein, (NERC 1978) in Onyesom (2005) posited that national development should be seen beyond the scope of the economic realm, and that non-economic aspects of national development, such as unity, stability, health services, social services and freedom should be taken into serious consideration.

The primary essence of national development is the totalistic transformation of human society, in order to achieve a sustainable and dependable economy. This can be attained even with ease when the process is well-planned. When the blue print is followed systematically and sequentially, the commitment and dedication of the citizens will be guaranteed and these are pivots for the attainment of national development objectives.

Seers (1977) in Oloyede (2010) identified three questions that must be asked in determining a country's development as:

- What is happening to poverty?
- What is happening to unemployment?
- What is happening to inequality?

According to him, "If all three of these have declined from high levels, then, beyond doubt, there has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse especially if all three have, it will be strange to call the result "development" even if per capital income doubled".

Sustainable National Development

Sustainable development, according to United Nations (1992), is an organizing principle for human life on a finite planet. It denotes a desirable future state for human society in which living conditions and resource use meet human needs without compromising the sustainability of natural systems and the environment, so that future generations may also have their needs met.

Sustainable development ties together concerns for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social, political, and economic challenges faced by humanity. The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in its 1987 report, defined sustainable development as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. There are three basic components of sustainable development as identified by United Nation charter. They include economic development, social development and environmental protection. These three principles are inseparable. They rely on each other for the mutual benefit of the members of the society.

Research: The word research has been conceptualized in various ways. Literally, research means to seek. It means to search and search and search until solution is found to advance the cause of development. Is-haq Oloyede, (2010) defined research as "the process of proffering solutions to human problems through well-defined methods; a systematic way of learning to re-learn and unlearn based on new insights deriving from knowledge". Furthermore, Oloyede views research as a careful examination of the situation for the purpose of effecting development and improvement. He also views it as a way of acquiring dependable and useful information and data about the particular object of research as well as the analysis of the data collected in order to arrive at a valid conclusion. The prime function of research therefore, is to discover answers to meaningful questions. Mordi (1999) defined research as a process of finding out solution to a problem. He also sees it as a systematic attempt to provide answers to educational questions. In addition, research is the

systematic attempt to obtain answers to meaningful questions about phenomenon or events through the application of scientific processes Peretomode and Ibeh, (1992). The common ground in these definitions is 'scientific attempt to provide answers to questions' or a process of proffering solutions to problems. There is no gain saying the fact that result-oriented scientific research is the panacea for sustainable growth and national development. Research methodology gives teachers the tools to analyze and make informed decisions about their practices therefore, they (educators) should step up their research endeavours to avoid stunted development.

Social Studies Research Mechanism

There are several research mechanisms in Social Studies Education that have aided immensely in finding solutions to problems affecting man and the entire human society. These research mechanisms have shown significant prospects in enhancing developmental strides in emerging societies. Participant observation as a qualitative research method is not divorced from this exploit.

Marshall and Rossman (1989) in Kawulich (2005) defined observation as "the systematic description of events, behaviours and artifacts in the social settings chosen for a study". Observation enables the researcher to describe existing situations using the five senses and provide a written photography of the situation under study. According to Wikipedia, (2010), participant observation is one type of data collection method typically done in the quantitative research paradigm. Simply put, participant observation is the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities. It provides the context for development of samples guidelines and interview guides. It could also be seen as the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the research setting.

Social studies education which has man as its focus needs a research mechanism that allows members of the society and learners to participate in identifying and proffering solutions to the problems which emerges as they interact with their environment. Research in social studies is meant to discover better solutions to man's problems. It is aimed at knowledge discovery through verifiable data information.

Observation method is useful to researchers in a variety of ways: It provides researchers with ways to check for nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent on various activities. In participant observation, the observer (Researcher) participates in ongoing activities and records observation. Participant observation encourages researchers to participate actively in the development processes, enhances interaction, among the key players and improves on the relationships with the entire process of national development.

The following are the reasons for using participant observation in development and cultural research as identified by Schensul, Schensul and Leccompte (1999) in Kawulich (2005) To:

1. identify and guide relationships with informants
2. help the researcher get the feel of how things are organized and prioritized, how people interrelate, and what cultural parameters are.
3. show the researcher what the cultural members deem to be important in manners, leadership, politics, social interaction, and taboos.
4. help the researcher become known to the cultural members, thereby easing facilitation of the research process.
5. provide researchers with a source of questions to be addressed with participants.

Bernard (1994) also advanced five reasons for including participant observation in cultural developmental studies, all of which increase the study's validity:

1. It makes it possible to collect different types of data. Being on site over a period of time familiarizes the researcher to the community, thereby facilitating involvement in sensitive activities to which he/she generally would not be invited.
2. It reduces the incidence of "reactivity" or people acting in a certain way when they are aware of being observed.
3. It helps the researcher to develop questions that make sense in the native language questions that are culturally relevant.
4. It gives the research a better understanding of what is happening in the culture and lends credence to one's interpretations of the observation. Participant observation also enables the researcher to collect both quantitative and qualitative data through surveys and interview.

5. It is sometimes the only way to collect the right data for one's study.

It is always the pride of the government in every society of the world to attain a higher value level of development to enable her citizens derive natural attachment to governance. However, for a nation to be in this phase of development there must be some pre-requisites, which include social-political and economic stability Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011).

The need for research in every society cannot be over emphasized. The world is what it is today because of research. The growth and development of every society depends largely on the quality of researches being carried out in such environment. For example, through research undertaking, man has been able to find solutions to the numerous challenges in his environment ranging from physical, social, economic, psychological, political and other areas. Research has all-inclusive effect on man and his environment. Its impact is felt on all the structures and functions of human environment. Therefore education and development of any nation depend on fruitful research for efficiency and effectiveness in today's world.

The Roles of Research in Social Studies Education

Researches in social studies education are valuable in the following respects: intellectual development. Through scientific research in Social Studies, contemporary knowledge and learning are arrived at. Research improves the intellectual ability and the thought processes of the researcher.

Skill's Acquisition: Social studies research experiences equip the learners with the skills of information location and acquisition, verification, validation of facts and data generalizations as well as drawing of conclusion. Social studies is known as a problem-solving discipline, therefore research in it helps in proffering solutions to the already existing social problems as well as identifying other social problems ravaging the society. The results that emanate from social studies research are used in arriving at educational measurement and decisions. Research development is used to monitor the impact of social issues on human existence.

According to Egbule (1998) in Mezieobi et al (2012), educational, researches are to discover general principles that can be utilized in the explanation, predication and control of issues relating to educational practices or development. Research is creative, exploring and reassuring in nature. However, effective research in social studies has been obstructed by the following factors:

One of the hiccups besetting research in social studies is failing to use activity-oriented methods during classroom teaching and learning. This has left students not sufficiently equipped with research skills in social studies education. There is need for learners to construct their knowledge by gradually processing within their zone of proximal development with the assistance of a peer or an adult. That is, learners should be involved practically in discovering ventures.

Research in social studies is also faced with the problem of ethical and moral issues. In our society, it is difficult to research on issues bordering on sex and sexuality, marriage affairs, prostitution, family planning, infectious diseases and the likes because of the negative attitude of members of the society, especially people in the rural communities. Research on these topical issues in social studies may get a biased or zero response.

According to Mezieobi et al (2012), the government of the day has concentrated much energies and aggressive interest in the development of science and technology, at the expense of realistically funding of researches in social studies education, which is aimed at reshaping the citizenry's attitudes and morals towards national development. Social studies as a discipline need to be critically funded both by government and even private individuals to accelerate research studies because it prepares the society for worthwhile meaningful living. Insufficient fund greatly impedes research in social studies education.

Lack of adequate use of the computer has hampered the efficacy of research in social studies education. The internet system facilitates research in social studies but it is unfortunate to note that many Social Studies teacher either have no access to the computer or are not computer literate. Therefore, it is imperative that computers be made available by the government, philanthropic and school authorities to teachers and training programmes organized for those who are computer illiterate. Computer knowledge will expose teachers to the available information and usher them to the global infinite resource of science and technology.

Conclusion/Suggestion

Social studies as a discipline is a tool fashioned to accomplish specific goals of the society. Therefore, social studies educators need research mechanism that will acquaint them with social studies research of whose those knowledge, skills, and attitudes are considered desirable and essential for effective research/studies. Development will only be progressive, functional and sustained if the connection between

Innovation is fully developed. High quality researches underpin knowledge creation and transfer that is linked to the achievement of national goal, in any society. Elevating research to a high strategic importance within our education sector is long overdue. (Oloyede, 2010). Social science research which is a problem-solving discipline requires qualitative research approaches for effective and oriented pedagogies. Therefore, increased budgetary allocation for research sponsorships from multinationals philanthropic individuals and organization is sine-qua-non to achieving these

researchers in tertiary institutions should not concentrate their researches mainly on publications development, but also on researches that could lead to the advancement of knowledge and directly and indirectly to economic progress and quality of life. Simply put, social studies educators should educate themselves through regular training/workshops and avail themselves of current information to the growth and development of the society.

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