
**STRENGTHENING RESEARCH IN SOCIAL STUDIES
FOR A BETTER NIGERIA: GOING THE EXTRA MILE**

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Abstract

Social Studies is a social science that is geared towards developing the individual for nation building, national unity and integration. Research entails investigation and it is aimed at improvement and development for the benefit of humanity. Research is the most important tool for advancing knowledge and relevant skills. There are few things, if any at all, that man has complete knowledge about in his environment. Even the knowledge already gained continues to show new dimensions or ramifications. The quest for expansion of knowledge and the intrinsic desire of man to improve himself has led him into research for more knowledge within and outside their domain. Without advances in research, development and growth will be at a standstill. Research is critical to the future and development of any nation. Hence, this paper is aimed at investigating the challenges of research in Social Studies and advancing workable strategies of strengthen it. The authors express optimism that quality research in Social Studies will influence human capital development that will in turn bring about improved output and productivity for national development. To achieve these objectives, this study

adopted the method of content analysis of relevant existing literature and materials to draw up conclusion based on the researchers' interest. Among others, the paper suggested that there is need for the removal of unnecessary administrative bottlenecks in accessing research funds (especially the TETFUND) and the government should establish and fund research training center with equipped libraries and internet services, to ensure quality research efforts among researchers.

Keywords: *Research, Social Studies, Nigeria, National Development.*

Introduction

There are few things if any at all, that man has complete knowledge about. Even the knowledge already gained continues to show new dimensions or ramifications. Hence, the relevance of research generally and research in Social Studies in particular in the development of societies globally has never been a subject of controversy. It is an indisputable fact that research is an instrument for technological, scientific, social, cultural and overall development. Concurring with this school of thought, Enoh cited in Nwogu and Kpee (2014) stated that at a time when there is overwhelming agreement over the relevance of university research the world over, it seems rather prosaic revisiting the issues.

National development is a process of building a nation to enhance the quality of the people and at the same time bringing about national unity (Unomah) cited in Egbule (2020). The above is achievable by harnessing and effectively utilizing the potential knowledge, skills and ability of the individual member of society. National development achievement can be accelerated through research in Social Studies. Research on the other hand, will bring about educational development that will in turn bring about human capital development. Social Studies is an aspect of social sciences, whose focus is geared towards building the individual and by extension building the nation. Social Studies plays socio-political roles, since the major objective of social science which social studies

is an integral part, is to prepare persons for political and social responsibilities.

In search of national development, the scholars identified consistent research in Social Studies as a necessary and veritable tool – as the discipline possesses the potentials to achieve the five cardinal goals of education (a major instrument for change) in Nigeria. Social Studies, by its interdisciplinary character, builds in students a core of basic knowledge and ways of thinking that prepare them to participate in civic and community life as actual and informed citizens. Critical issues of national development are multidisciplinary in nature and so, understanding them and developing resolutions to them require multidisciplinary education. This constitutes the defining aspects of Social Studies to include the building of responsible citizenship who eventually will contribute positively to national development (Eso & Enu, 2019). This paper therefore is a clarion call for stakeholders (Government, NGOs, private individuals) to be actively involved in funding researches in education in general and Social Studies in particular.

Conceptual Clarifications

Research is a careful search and systematic investigation towards increasing the sum of knowledge. Okorodudu (2013) defined research as a diligent and systematic attempt to provide plausible answers to questions by the process of logically designed operations. Aigbokhaevbolo and Ofianson cited in Esene and Mgbonyebi (2014) defined research as the scientific study of a problem by way of an investigation undertaken in order to find solution and increase knowledge. It is a scholarly and systematic application of scientific principles to find solution to an identified problem(s). Research is also considered to be the search for truthful answers to legitimate questions. Furthermore, it is for formal investigation designed to develop or contribute to knowledge in the field of study (Garbs, 2014). Flowing from the above definitions, research is simply, the search for new knowledge and contribution to existing knowledge in any field it study through modification and invention.

The concept “national development” is used to conjure a variety of meanings. However, Mezieobi (2010) conceptualized national

development as a process of systematic transformation of the overall social, economic, political, scientific and technological life of a nation via reflective thinking, sound decision-making, effective planning, active participation of the citizens and their attitudinal will to give such reconstruction a chance. The social facet of national development connotes high literacy rate, adequate housing, declining unemployment rate, improved social ethics, social justice, cultural perpetuation and adequate provision of social amenities and services.

Social Studies is a combination of selected portions of social sciences. Mezieobi cited in Mezieobi (2010) visualized Social Studies as a formalized, correlated or integrated study of man and his environments which imbues the learner with the “cognition skills, values, attitudes, abilities and competencies that will enable him become an informed, rational, analytical, participative and functional citizen in his environments and beyond. In a nut shell, social studies is the study of ourselves and our environment.

Social Studies and National Development in Nigeria

The indispensability of Social Studies in national development cannot be over-emphasized. Some of the indispensable values and attitudes for national development which Social Studies inculcates in the learners, according to Mezieobi (2010) are co-operation, dedication, hard work, interdependence, tolerance, true sense of nationhood, loyalty, commitment, unity of purpose, patriotism and integrative nationalism. A major bane of Nigeria national development is the lack of a true sense of nationhood which Social Studies tends to address.

Furthermore, Agbure (2010) states that Social Studies essentially prepares individual learners and society in general to actively participate in nation building. Since one of the components of the discipline is aimed at political education, social studies builds the leaders that build the nation. Social studies teaching prepare the citizens who become leaders that builds the nation. He stated further that the subject is a discipline which prepares the youth to meet and solve controversial social issues of which national development is one.

Research in Social Studies and its Relevance to Nigeria's Development

It is an indisputable truism that quality education is a catalyst for national development. "Build the individual, build the nation". According to Igwehuike cited in Egbule (2020) research involves the total procedure employed in collecting, organizing, summarizing and interpreting data for the benefit of arriving at dependable answers to questions about education. Research in Social Studies provides a sound means of adding knowledge to the discipline, assists educational experts including teachers, planners, administrators among other, to relate more effectively in and out of educational environment, and makes it easy to improve on teaching and learning method to promote meaningful learning outcome in schools, which invariably culminates in bringing about the fulfillment of educational goals and objectives for national development. Research as a second search for knowledge will bring about discovering new facts, based on recent developments which will render existing information or studies obsolete. Research in Social Studies therefore encapsulates a wide range of procedural activities in which individual evaluate different aspects of Social Studies pedagogy for effective teaching and learning process.

According to Ossai (2014) Social Studies is known as a problem solving discipline, therefore, research in Social Studies helps in proffering solutions to the already existing social problems as well as identifying other social problems ravaging the society. The results that emanated from social studies researches are used in arriving at new educational policies and reforms, to foster national development. Through scientific research in social studies contemporary issues and learning are arrive at. As new knowledge emerges, solutions to problems and answers to questions are logically unfolded. Social Studies research is the most important tool for advancing knowledge, promoting progress and social transformation, which enhances national development.

Research in Social Studies will foster national development, because the discipline is associated with socio-economic activities and political awareness. However, it is through a viable educational planning and adequate funding for human capital development

that is required to produce vibrant manpower to pilot the economy of the state.

It also can lead to job creation. The orientation and exposure of trainee researchers prepare them for possible employment as research assistants, experts or consultants depending on the level and depth of involvement within the schooling time. Lastly, and probably more importantly, research in Social Studies is specifically aimed at improving the quality of education through the process of modern and sophisticated teaching and learning techniques in the classroom situation. The whole system of education needs improvement through researches. The school curriculum needs to be evaluated and reviewed over-time to reflect the constant changes in the society (Egbule & Okobia, 1998). It is believed that such innovations will broaden the academic horizon of teachers - this will help them to contribute intellectually to all aspects of the economy. In fact, urgent and total implementation of research findings and recommendations can actually fuel the Nigerian economy. A country like China has used research to come up with new products to boost her economy and foreign exchange earnings.

Challenges Facing Research in Social Studies

A strong growing, sustainable development is the desire of every nation of the world. To achieve the following measures are indispensable: Strengthen Bilateral Relationship: Nigeria, despite her riches (material and human resources) has not been very successful in wooing investors to the continent. A significant bottleneck for economic development in many countries of the region is the poor physical infrastructure. The most important things to reiterate about the region's economy is that it remains undeveloped and is becoming increasingly marginalized in a competitive global economy where other developing regions are making the fastest headway. Most developing countries, including the Nigeria, cannot generate enough investment capital from within and are largely failing to attract foreign investments.

Political Stability and Good Governance: Political stability is a sine qua non to meaningful development, as a peaceful climate in a polity is an essential prerequisite for national development.

Inadequate funding: Inadequate funding is a major threat to effective research in Social Studies. Carrying out research(es) requires finance. Hence it becomes difficult if the education system has limited funding capacities. Inadequate supply of research materials greatly impedes research in Social Studies. This will grossly affect the research efforts of researchers in the education and research industries, because after salaries and allowances are paid to staff, there is little or nothing left in the coffers to pursue any meaningful research efforts. The poor resources however lead researchers to churning out poor research findings, all in a bid to beat the popular assumption in Nigeria educational system that you either publish or perish (Osiobe) cited in (Ekwevugbe, 2014).

Inadequate provisions of ICT equipment: The cost of equipment are often enormous in a country like Nigeria with a “crippling economy” and terrible devalued currency. A huge financial requirement for the procurement and installation of hardware and software necessary for implementation of the ICT-based programmes poses a great challenge in carrying out researches (Esene & Mghonyebi, 2014). The internet services are supposed to facilitate research in Social Studies; however, non-availability or inadequate provision of these facilities has hampered the efficacy of research in Social Studies.

The Problem of Fraud Research: Peretomode and Ibeh (1992) in Okobia and Chukwuma (2018) expressed fear that knowledge generated through fraud research affect the needed changes and the reliance on unscientific ways of thinking by those responsible for decision-making would directly or indirectly hamper the quality of our educational process and products. Ann in Okobia and Chukwuma (2018) sees fraud research as a person who produces a research work for the public through cheating. Such cheating in research as stated by Ann includes the following: plagiarism, fabrication of data, falsification of information and citation, dry-lobbying, sabotage and professional misconduct (improper grading of research papers). Some basic reasons for fraud research are: greed, poor research allowance, inadequate monitoring, stringent promotion requirement, etc.

Politicking and Moral Meltdown among Students and Lecturers of Tertiary Institutions: The Federal Government of Nigeria observed that tertiary institutions should carry out research and ensure that education and research meet the requirements laid down for economic growth and national development. Unfortunately, most lecturers and students are busy politicking within and outside the campuses, instead of engaging in meaningful research for human, material and economic development. In addition, although unpalatable, the climate of our tertiary institutions are now associated with negative trends. In fact, all the vices seen in the wider society: corruption (selling of grades), kidnapping, cultism, rape, robbery, killing, sexual harassment, indecent dressing, prostitution, drug abuse and addiction, alcoholism, nudity and strip and night clubs etc.) are rearing their ugly heads in the academic institutions. Rather than fostering positive development, tertiary institutions are now serving as preparatory group for “criminality development”.

Low Enrolment of Postgraduate Students: Research is an important and serious aspect of postgraduate programme. However, Sawyer and Barry cited in Egbule (2020). lamented that there is low enrolment of programme study in most African universities. In developing countries of Africa, the equipment, facilities and materials needed for meaningful researches are lacking. In most cases where they are available, most of these equipments and facilities are obsolete. Hence, rich Nigerians prefer to run their masters and Ph.D programmes abroad.

The Publish or Perish Syndrome: The publish or perish syndrome tends to divert the attention of Nigeria academia from engaging in meaningful research and developmental activities. In fact, tertiary institution authorities place too much emphasis on number of publications for promotion, rather than the quality or impact of research on the society. According Osagiede (2013) the crave for publication for promotion make lecturers busy themselves with scratching the surface of their discipline in the bid to write and publish as many papers as possible to earn promotion.

Inadequate Research Skills in Modern Methods and Constraints of Facilities: There are innovations in global educational systems

(research inclusive). Education is no longer localized, rather, it is now globalized, hence, there is need to update ones knowledge to flow with the trend. Also, the constraints of facilities materials and equipments for carrying out the state – of – the –art research, is another major threat to quality research in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Attitude of Stakeholders towards Research Recommendations: In most developing countries (Nigeria inclusive) the society, industrialists and government seem to have poor attitude towards research. Related to this is poor communication between research institutes and the productive sector of the economy. Inadequate and difficulty in accessing research grants, use of out-dated methodology, a shift from collaborative to individual research are also among the challenges militating against effective research in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Inability to Access Government Grants: Closely related to under funding is the inability of individual or group of researchers to attract and access grants and funds. The processes involved in accessing grants is very cumbersome and in some cases time consuming. Attempt at getting funds from banks and other financial institutions are rebuffed because the researchers may not have collaterals to be used for approving their loans (Mordian, 2012) cited in (Egbule, Aghulor & Okobia, 2017). In Nigeria billons of naira are said to be made available by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) for research purposes, unfortunately, most researchers find it difficult to access these funds due to unnecessary requirements and rigorous procedures of assessment.

Resolving the Challenges for the Development in Nigeria

This has implications for burying our unproductive differences, eschewing parochialism and selfishness, and coming together for national development via mass mobilization, hard work and good governance. Nations like the United States, Japan, China, Germany and Russia which have hard work and patriotism as aspects of their national ethos, have their names engraved in world history as developed nations.

Mechanization of Agriculture: Today, agriculture in Nigeria has suffered from long years of neglect, mismanagement, inconsistent and poorly conceived government policies, lack of government meaningful incentive to farmers, lack of basic infrastructure and many bureaucratic bottlenecks in executing policies and agricultural programmes among government agencies. As a major sector of the economy, the indispensability of the agricultural sector can never be over-stressed. Mechanized agriculture is the process of using agricultural machinery to mechanize the work of agriculture, greatly increasing farmers' productivity. In modern times, powered machinery has replaced many jobs formerly carried out by manual labour or by working animals such as oxen, horses and mules. Mechanization of agriculture was one of the factors responsible for urbanization and industrial economies. Besides improving production efficiency for economic growth and development, mechanization encourages large scale production and improves the quality of farm produce (Egbule & Ogudo, 2015).

Diversification of the Economy: The over dependence of a particular sector of the economy among the developing countries is a major threat to their economic growth and national development. For example, before the discovery of oil in Nigeria in 1956, she was famous in her agrarian economy through which cash crops like palm produce, cocoa, rubber, timber, groundnuts, were exported, thus making Nigeria a major exporter in that respect. In addition, Nigeria had nineteen million head of cattle: the largest in Africa. Nigeria is no longer a major producer of either of the cash crops mentioned above. Another huge blow to crude oil exporters was America's reduction in the number of barrels she imports from other nations. To curb this menace, the authors express optimism that economic diversification which demands active participation in wide range of sectors, and firmly integrated are better able to generate robust growth and great potential to increase Nigeria's resilience and contribute to achieving and sustaining long economic growth and development in the affected countries.

Strengthening Education and Research: Education has been noted as the bedrock for any meaningful and sustainable development, hence the need for continuous emphasis on its attainment. Governments of those countries must provide the facilities needed for the running of the schools. Through formal education, individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values, attitudes etc. which enable them to contribute maximally to the all round development of this society. Researches are conducted with the aim of improving existing situations. The education industry certainly needs improvement- this is achievable through researches. A great deal of importance has been given to research in the developed world. Developed countries like Germany, China and Japan believe in research and development and consequently invest heavily on it. Their huge investment explains their enhanced and enviable level of industrialization and relative peace and security in those areas. The emerging nations of the world should emulate the developed countries by adequate funding of education and research.

Industrialization: When we talk of industrialized nations, we are usually referring to countries such as the U.S.A., UK, Japan, West Germany, China, Canada, Russia and few others. However, one thing these countries have in common is that their economies are characterized by a relatively large manufacturing sector and highly developed technology, both of which are applied to the development of other sectors of the economy, namely, agriculture, mining, commerce and services (Agu & Udu, 2008) in (Egbule, 2020). According to Anyanwuocha cited Egbule and Okobia (2019), industrialization is a phenomenon in the development of nations, characterized by the growth of machine and power tools production, the growth of mechanical and technical skills (technology) required for industrial production with attendant large –scale production, all of which lead to changes in the social and economic organization of society. The major gain of industrialization is the provision of modern sector employment. This will help to quashing the effects of unemployment in emerging countries.

Provision of Adequate Legislation to Fight Corruption: Corruption is a cancer that has eaten deep into the fabric of most nations of the world. Hence, the need to fight this menace through the parliament and adequate legislation cannot be underrated. A number of scholars have advanced a number of ways of curbing corruption in the developing countries of the world. Among these are strengthening mechanisms for monitoring and punishment, increase accountability and adequate legislation. In Nigeria, the established institutions and agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), National Agency for Prevention of Traffic in Human Persons (NAPTHP) and many others are good steps toward fighting corruption. According to Akasiri (2015), modern legislatures perform over-sight functions and provide institutional mechanism for ensuring accountability, transparency, equity, fair play, inclusiveness and thus good governance. The role of the legislature in curbing corruption is fundamental in emerging economies for socio-political and economic development.

Conclusion

This paper examined the place of research in Social Studies in national development. Research is simply the search for new knowledge to meet human needs and solve emerging problems. It is directed towards the solution of an identified problem. In fact, it remains a veritable instrument for societal transformation and sustainable national development. Research in Social Studies, therefore, will bring about meaningful learning outcome which invariably culminates in bringing about the fulfillment of education goals and objectives for national development. Research cuts across all fields of learning, as it is useful in programme evaluation and validation of educational theories through the provision of evidence, logical and empirical studies. Research is an indispensable medium through which Nigeria can truly say she is striving to achieve national development. Without government support for research, the achievement of vision 2020:20 and the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) will be a mirage.

Suggestions

Social Studies teachers should be encouraged to attend conferences, seminars and workshops in order to update their knowledge on the innovative trend in the teaching/learning process, especially the use of information and communication technology (ICT) facilities.

Unnecessary administrative bottlenecks in accessing research funds (especially TETFUND) should be removed. The fear of globalization is beginning of economic woes. Hence, African governments should adopt a proactive approach to globalization so that the challenges it poses and the benefits it offers can be foreseen and planned for.

The government should establish and fund research training center with equipped libraries and internet services, to ensure quality research efforts among researchers. Adequate motivation of researchers (lecturers, postgraduate students, research institutes) through provision of research grants and compensations is also recommended. Research findings should be communicated to the government via Scientific Research and Development Commission, for publication and immediate implementation to elicit national development. Nigerian parliaments should legislate laws to enhance educational research.

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