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**SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IN THE CONTEXT OF NIGERIA'S EDUCATION
PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS: THE NEXUS**

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Abstract

The inability of the Nigerian state to fully actualize her educational goals calls for concern. Social studies education is an instrument for renewal of our societal practices that constitute obstacles to national unity and development. This paper, therefore, focused on the relationship between social studies curriculum and the philosophy and goals of education in Nigeria. The concepts of education, curriculum and social studies curriculum, were discussed. The scholars also traced the birth of the National Policy on Education; Nigeria's education philosophy and goals were also stated. The paper concluded that there is a strong relationship between social studies education curriculum and Nigeria's education philosophy and goals. The paper recommends amongst others that in the planning and development of the curriculum of any discipline, efforts should be made to put into consideration the overall goals of the nation's educational system as well as the teaching of social studies at all levels of education.

Keywords: Education, curriculum, social studies curriculum, Nigeria's education philosophy and

INTRODUCTION

Generally, education aims at the full integration of the individual into the society. Education is the imparting and acquiring of knowledge through teaching and learning, especially at schools or similar institutions. It may be formal or informal. Education has been noted as the bedrock for any meaningful and sustainable development; hence the need for a functional, quality, inclusive and integrated education cannot be undermined. In fact, it is a tool through which the country's socio-economic, scientific and technological development is achieved. Education is the instrument for empowering young people with knowledge and skills which provide them access to productive employment.

In recognition of the need for education, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) noted that education is that process concerned with the transmission of worthwhile values, skills, and knowledge suitable for developing learners' potentials for national development. The policy statement further emphasized that

education is the most important instrument for change. Anaduke and Okafor (2013) cited in Umo (2014) noted that the major goal of education in any nation is to prepare its citizens for responsible and productive adult life so as to be able to function honestly, efficiently, and effectively in the society in which they live. However, the inability of Nigeria's educational system to achieve the stated goals prompted or necessitated this study; which is aimed at establishing the relationship between the Nigeria's education philosophy and goals and social studies education curriculum.

In general, the curriculum pays particular attention to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the critical elements of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS). Social studies education as an area of study has a lot of contributions towards the attainment of the five main national goals and educational goals. It involves the adult and the young within the society to develop their

competences to enable them solve and manage the socio-economic and physical forces arising in their midst. It is not concerned with either the study of men per se, rather with the study of man within the context of his environment: social, physical, political, economic, cultural and technological environments (Ezegbe, 1994) cited in (Ahmad, 2013).

The uniqueness of social studies, as a discipline of study in the school system, places it at a vantage position (point) to contribute substantially towards the realization of Nigeria's educational goals. Social studies, according to Osakwe (2010), through its curricular offering, provide young people with opportunity for nurturing the virtues of self-realization, better human relationship, self and national economic efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, social and political advancement, scientific and technological development. Since social studies is an integrative field of study and Nigeria is a political and cultural amalgam, the subject offers itself as a veritable vehicle for propelling the nation towards the achievement of Nigeria's educational goals, the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Education For All (EFA) goals and, hence national integrated development.

Concepts of Education and Curriculum

The concept of education relates to all efforts made by the society to accomplish set objectives considered to be desirable in the life of the individuals as well as satisfying societal needs (Okorodudu, 2015). Herbart (1776) cited in Ughamadu (2006) maintained that education is a process of developing sound moral character for the good of the society.

There is no universally accepted or precise definition of the term Curriculum. Tyler (1963) cited in Ughamadu (2006) defined curriculum as all of the learning of students which is planned and directed by the school to attain its educational goals. Simply put, curriculum is all the experiences of the learner under the supervision of the school.

Concept of Social Studies Curriculum

Social studies is the study of man within his environment: physical, social, economic, physiological, religious, political, cultural, scientific and technological. According to Mezieobi (1993) social studies curriculum refers to planned and unplanned, though positive oriented, societal sanitized learning activities, experiences, contents and methods which learners are provided with and exposed to in and outside the school, most appropriately under the guidance of teachers, for the purposes of contributing its quota to the accomplishment of societal needs. Hence, social studies curriculum focused on learning experiences which deals with man's interaction with his social and natural environments, acquisition of problem solving skills, and new areas like population and family life education, AIDS education, peace education, drug abuse education and so on.

The Philosophy and Goals of Education in Nigeria

The need for a national policy on education came as a result of the 1969 National Curriculum Conference which was attended by a cross-section of Nigerians. The conference was a culmination of expression of general dissatisfaction with the existing education system which has become irrelevant to national needs, aspirations and goals. After the National Curriculum Conference, a seminar of experts drawn from a wide range of interest groups within Nigeria was convened in 1973. The outcome of the seminar was a draft document which; after due comments were received from the states and other interest groups, led to the final document, - the National Policy on Education, first published in 1977 (FRN, 2004).

According to the FRN (2004), a nation's policy on education is government's way of realizing that part of the national goals which can be achieved using education as a tool. No policy on education, however, can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and goals of the nation. The overall philosophy of Nigeria is

to:

- Live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice;
- Promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding.

The five main national goals of Nigeria, which have been endorsed as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education, 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
- Land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

In Nigeria's philosophy of Education, the nation believe that:

- Education is an instrument for national development, to this end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development, and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education;
- Education fosters the worth and development of the individual, for each individual's sake, and for the general development of the society.
- Every Nigerian child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability;

There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria; to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive; while interest and ability should determine the individual's direction in education. Nigeria's philosophy of education therefore is based on:-

- The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen.
- The full integration of the individual into the community; and
- The provision of equal access to

educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.

For the philosophy to be in harmony with Nigeria's national goals, education has to be geared towards self realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress. The national educational goals, which derive from the philosophy, are therefore:

- The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- The inculcation of the right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his or her society.

The Objectives of Social Studies Education in Nigeria

A number of objectives exist for various subjects. The objectives of social studies, according to Osunde (1989) in Ukadike (2003) include to:

- Create an awareness and understanding of our evolving social and physical environment as a whole in its natural man-made cultural and spiritual resources together with the rational use and conservation of those resources for national development,
- Develop a capacity to learn and to acquire certain basic skills including not only those of listening, speaking, reading and writing and of calculation, but also those skills of hand and head, together with those of observation, analysis and inference which are essential to the forming of

- sound social, economic and political judgment.
- Ensure the acquisition of that relevant body of knowledge and information which is essential pre-requisite to personal development as well as to a positive personal contribution to the betterment of mankind.
- Develop a sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and inter-dependence of the members of the local community and the wider national and international community,
- Develop in students positive attitudes of togetherness, comradeship and co-operation towards a healthy nation: the inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness and justice at work and play as one's contribution to the development of the nation;
- Promotion of an understanding of the social problems of their locality and finding possible solutions to them;
- Development of the ability to think reflectively and come to independent conclusions;
- Creation of awareness that discipline is essential for an orderly society, and
- Demonstration of flexibility and a willingness to accept necessary changes within a system, i.e. education, government or law, for the good of all.

These objectives according to Osunde (1989) in Ukadike (2003) were developed to solve specific and national problems. They also aimed at exposing them to the problems in the society and equipping them with the necessary skills needed for their survival.

The Relationship between Nigeria's Educational Goals and Social Studies Education Curriculum

There is the need to constantly reassess the contribution a subject can make to the education of young people. This need becomes even greater at a time when there is a major reorganization and restructuring of a country's educational

programmes. This will guide the teachers in their teaching and in choosing their more specific classroom objectives. The proper and legitimate contribution which social studies has to offer a child can best be considered in relation to the ultimate purpose of education in Nigeria (Osakwe & Itedjere, 2005).

The main thrust of Nigeria's educational system is to build her citizens for all round development. This is achievable through effective implementation of social studies curriculum. In the view of Ogun (2006) cited in Ahmad (2013) social studies as a field of study instills in students the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions that are considered important in the relationship and interaction of man and those around him on one hand and the entire environment on the other hand. Another major concern of social studies education is to develop and mature democratic society, practicing a form of mature consensus, community-oriented Nigeria democracy that can be a model for many developing countries.

In formulating these educational goals, the National Policy has given consideration to the needs of learners in our schools and society. However, the policy does not go to the extent of specifying the nature of the individual disciplines and the contribution which they can make towards realizing the stated national objectives. It is our task as social studies educators to examine the nature of our subject and consider how it could contribute to the set goals for the Nigerian school system. How can social studies serve as a vehicle for implementing and achieving the national educational objectives as outlined in the National Policy on Education of 2004? A close look at the National objectives as set out in the National Policy would help throw some light on the contributions that social studies as a discipline can make in achieving these set goals.

According to Osakwe & Itedjere (2005) social studies is very much concerned with national consciousness and national unity. In fact, social studies has a lion's share in contributing towards the realization of the goals of national consciousness and

national unity. Social studies is very much concerned with creating an awareness and understanding of our physical, social, economic, political and cultural environments, together with the rational use and conservation of our natural resources for national development. Social studies is very highly involved with raising the level of awareness of our national goals and aspirations and the need to have pride in the nation and also the need for peaceful co-existence among the various groups in the country. National consciousness and national unity form the bedrock of social studies and hence the total incorporation of citizenship education as an integral aspect of social studies education.

With regard to the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society, that is, the second goal of education in Nigeria, social studies education promotes societal development by inculcating effectual values which humanity in general, consider as important to the enhancement of order, peace, progress, happiness, protection of the weak and the invalid, social cohesion and solidarity. The right type of values and attitudes acquired through social studies education will pattern man's behaviour in agreement with the societal norms and values that promoted society stability. According to Osakwe & Itedjere (2005), a careful examination of the goals of social studies would reveal that the subject is a veritable organ for realizing such lofty goals. Social studies is concerned with human relationship. We may also state that the ultimate goal of education in the social studies is the development of desirable socio-civic and personal behaviour. No society would thrive except its members behave in ways which further its development. People's behaviour tends to reflect the values, ideals, beliefs and attitudes which they accept. In addition, social studies is concerned with the development of positive attitudes in students and the need to uphold the ideal of our society including the respect of other people's opinions and wishes so long as they do not endanger national goals.

The objective that hinges on the training of the mind on the world around is intricately inter-woven with the knowledge component of the objectives of social studies. This has to do with the creation of an awareness and understanding of the evolving physical and social environment of the country. Social studies is an informative subject that has to do with development within a society. The information in social studies is usually current and up-to-date. Consequently, social studies educators are expected to be quite versatile and current in their information gathering and dissemination. The information so gathered is expected to be used in fostering national cohesion and the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes (Osakwe & Itedjere, 2005).

Finally, with regard to the national educational objective that talks about the acquisition of appropriate skills, one quickly observes that social studies has much to offer in this regard. One of the major objectives of social studies has to do with the development in its learners a capacity to learn and acquire certain basic skills, both mental and physical. Social studies offers a useful avenue for inculcating social, physical and intellectual skills in its learners. According to Jarolimek (1977) in (Osakwe & Itedjere, 2005) many believe that social studies education should and does have anything to do with the development of civic and citizenship knowledge, attitudes, values and skills. The goals of social studies education may be said to be coterminous with those of the entire school programme in its effort to help young people to become responsible thinking-feeling people.

Conclusion

The paper examined social studies education curriculum in the context of Nigeria's educational goals, the objectives of social studies education and how they can be used to achieve the country's educational goals. It is clear that there is a strong relationship between the Nigeria's educational goals and social studies education curriculum. Curriculum of a particular discipline will become irrelevant if

it does not address current and anticipated needs of the society and contribute towards the achievement of overall goals of the educational system. In the light of the above view, it is concluded that social studies education curriculum is a veritable instrument for the attainment of Nigeria's educational goals. Therefore, effective implementation of social studies curriculum is highly recommended to foster the actualization of Nigeria's education philosophy and goals.

Recommendations

- The teaching of social studies should be made compulsory at all levels.
- Considering the place of social studies in achieving the Nigeria's educational goals, the subject should be taught by well qualified teachers. It must not be seen as a "free zone" for any social scientist.
- It is important that in the planning and development of the curriculum of any discipline, efforts should be made to put into consideration the overall goals of the nation's educational system.
- Also, in the achievement of Nigeria's educational goals, curriculum planning should be both futuristic and goal oriented. This means it should be concerned with the future and the purpose should be to achieve specific goals.
- A periodic and critical appraisal and evaluation of Nigeria's educational goals is imperative.
- Social studies teachers should be trained and re-trained for the effective use of appropriate teaching method(s) that will improve their capabilities for maximal productivity.
- There is the need for upward review of teachers' remuneration to serve as a motivation for higher output, productivity and effectiveness.
- Government at all levels should as a matter of urgency make adequate provision of instructional materials in schools. More educational resource

and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) centers should be established.

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