

Repositioning Social Studies Education as a Mechanism for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Social studies education holds significant potential for driving sustainable national development in Nigeria. This study aims to explore the repositioning Social Studies Education as a mechanism for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria. It was discovered that social studies are a veritable instrument for national and economic development. Repositioning social studies education as a mechanism for sustainable national development in Nigeria is crucial for building an informed, active, and responsible citizenry. By emphasizing citizenship education, promoting national unity, and addressing socio-economic challenges, Social Studies education can contribute significantly to Nigeria's sustainable development goals. Through curriculum enhancement, teacher professional development, community engagement, and the integration of technology, Nigeria can ensure the effective repositioning of Social Studies education to shape a better future for the nation. However, repositioning Social Studies education as a mechanism for sustainable national development is crucial for equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to actively participate in addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges and contribute to Nigeria's sustainable future. Therefore, government should show positive commitment to the effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum. Social studies education curriculum should be made to take cognizance of important changes and challenges in the environment and prepares the learners to meet such challenges. The Social Studies curriculum should be revised periodically and updated with critical, national and international issues in economic management.

Keywords: *Repositioning, Mechanism, Sustainable, National Development, Commitment*

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Background to the Study

Social Studies education plays a crucial role in shaping the civic, social, and economic development of a nation. Social Studies education holds immense potential for driving sustainable national development in Nigeria. By equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for active citizenship and sustainable practices, Social Studies can contribute significantly to the country's development goals. Citizenship education, environmental awareness, and social and economic development are key areas where Social Studies education can play a pivotal role (Ogbuanya, 2021; Adetunde, 2018; Ajibade, 2019). Citizenship education within the Social Studies curriculum empowers students to understand their rights, responsibilities, and the democratic process, fostering active participation in societal development (Ogbuanya, 2021). By promoting an understanding of social issues, cultural diversity, and human rights, Social Studies education cultivates responsible and informed citizens who contribute to sustainable national development.

Environmental awareness and sustainability are critical for Nigeria's sustainable development. Social Studies education can raise awareness about environmental issues, climate change, and sustainable practices (Adetunde, 2018). By integrating topics such as environmental conservation, resource management, and sustainable development, Social Studies education enables students to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions and actively contribute to sustainable practices.

Moreover, Social Studies education in Nigeria can contribute to social and economic development. By equipping students with an understanding of economic principles, entrepreneurship, and social justice, Social Studies education enhances critical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities (Ajibade, 2019). Students become well-positioned to address social inequalities, poverty, and other economic challenges, thereby driving sustainable economic growth and societal progress.

Repositioning Social Studies education for sustainable national development in Nigeria requires curriculum development, teacher training, active learning approaches, and stakeholder collaboration. Upgrading the curriculum to include sustainability concepts and current issues is essential (Adegoke & Adeyemi, 2019). Providing teachers with professional development opportunities enhances their understanding of sustainability concepts and instructional strategies (Omorogbe & Ikhimwin, 2020). Active learning approaches, such as project-based learning and community engagement, foster critical thinking and real-world application (Ogundiran & Adewale, 2020). Finally, collaboration among educational institutions, government agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders ensures the integration of Social Studies education into sustainable development efforts (Okunoye, 2019). In the context of Nigeria, repositioning Social Studies education as a mechanism for sustainable national development is essential to foster active citizenship, promote national unity, and address socio-economic challenges. This research aims to explore the repositioning Social Studies Education as a mechanism for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria.

Concept of Social Studies

Social Studies is an inter-disciplinary course of study that studies human beings in groups of inter-relationships within both their social and physical environments. Social Studies has been accorded a place of pride in the National Policy on Education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria by making it a core subject in the lower and upper basic schools in Nigeria (NPE, 2014). This is because of the crucial roles of Social Studies education in preparing and mobilizing students in schools to enable them create awareness and understanding that would transform them into citizens with skills, competences, moral values and reasoned judgments to effectively live, interact, inter-relate and contribute positively to economic, social, political and cultural development of their societies. Mezieobi, Fubara & Mezieobi S. A. (2008) saw Social Studies as an integrative field of study which probes man's symbiotic relationship with his environments, evolves man with the reflective or contemplative capacities, intellectual, affective, social and work skills, to enable him understand his world and its problems and rationally solve or cope with them for effective living in the society.

Concept of National Development

Chumbow (1990) defined national development as “the nation's human resources acting on its natural resources to produce goods (tangible and intangible) in order to improve the welfare and social well-being of citizens of the entire nation in terms of indicators of development predicated on minimum standards of living which include (among others) a reasonable standard of good health and housing facilities, food security, life expectancy (reduction of infant mortality and improvement of maternal and reproductive health), education and literacy, and employment”.

The goal of development in any sovereign nation is to achieve self-reliance and to ensure citizens, the qualitative needs of life. This pre-supposes that the country's natural resources would be harnessed and appropriately transformed by the application of modern technology into valuable goods and services. For Awoyemi, (2000) national development can be defined as a qualitative improvement in the state or situation of an entire country or nation. According to Mastle (2010), in national development, the development of physical facilities or infrastructure like good roads, pipe borne water, well equipped hospital, good schools, etc and human development will be well appreciated by citizens. He went on to state that national development has to be all-round to make any meaning to the nation. National development results from two dynamics. One is internal dynamic determined by the efforts of the country itself and the people; and the other is an external dynamic which comes from the indispensable advantages drawn from international cooperation in terms of technical and financial support. The internal dynamic is largely propelled by the activities of firms who actually produce the goods and services.

Importance of Social Studies Education for Sustainable National Development

- 1. Citizenship Education:** Social Studies education equips students with knowledge, values, and skills necessary for active citizenship and participation in the democratic processes of a nation (Babajide, 2017). It fosters an understanding of rights,

responsibilities, and civic engagement, which are crucial for building a politically conscious and engaged citizenry.

2. **National Unity and Identity:** Social Studies education promotes national unity and a sense of shared identity among diverse ethnic and cultural groups within Nigeria. It emphasizes the appreciation of cultural diversity, tolerance, and respect for different perspectives (Ogunniyi, 2019). By fostering social cohesion, social studies education contributes to sustainable national development.
3. **Addressing Socio-economic Challenges:** Social Studies education provides students with a comprehensive understanding of social, economic, and environmental issues that impact their communities and the nation as a whole. It equips them with critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills needed to address socio-economic challenges, such as poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and corruption (Akinsanya, 2020).

Strategies for Repositioning Social Studies Education in Nigeria

Ololube(2018) listed the following strategies for repositioning Social Studies in Nigeria as follows:

1. **Curriculum Enhancement:** Review and update the Social Studies curriculum to reflect contemporary socio-economic issues and challenges faced by Nigeria. Ensure the inclusion of local and global perspectives, relevant case studies, and experiential learning opportunities to enhance students' understanding of sustainable national development.
2. **Teacher Professional Development:** Provide teachers with opportunities for continuous professional development in Social Studies education. Training programs should focus on pedagogical strategies, content knowledge, and the integration of technology to enhance the delivery of Social Studies lessons (Ololube, 2018).
3. **Community Engagement:** Foster partnerships between schools and local communities to facilitate practical learning experiences and community-based projects. Engaging students in service-learning initiatives and civic activities will deepen their understanding of social issues and empower them to contribute to sustainable development within their communities.
4. **Integration of Technology:** Harness the potential of technology in social studies education to enhance learning experiences and promote active engagement. Incorporate digital resources, interactive platforms, and simulations that allow students to explore real-world problems and develop innovative solutions (Babalola, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

One relevant theory that relates to repositioning social studies education as a mechanism for sustainable national development is the Theory of Active Citizenship Education. This theory

emphasizes the importance of education in cultivating active and responsible citizenship, which is crucial for sustainable development (Schulz & Ainley, 2018). According to this theory, Social Studies education plays a fundamental role in promoting civic engagement, social cohesion, and participatory democracy.

The Theory of Active Citizenship Education posits that social studies education should go beyond transmitting knowledge about political and social systems. It should actively engage students in analyzing societal issues, developing critical thinking skills, and participating in democratic processes (Schulz & Ainley, 2018). By providing students with opportunities to explore real-world problems and encouraging them to act, social studies education can foster a sense of agency and empower students to become active agents of change in their communities. This theory aligns with the objective of repositioning Social Studies education as a mechanism for sustainable national development in Nigeria. By incorporating active citizenship education principles into the curriculum, social studies can help students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to address social, economic, and environmental challenges. This includes promoting environmental stewardship, advocating for social justice, and participating in civic activities that contribute to sustainable development.

Applying the Theory of Active Citizenship Education in Social Studies classrooms can involve project-based learning, service-learning initiatives, simulations, and debates that encourage students to actively engage with real-world issues (McNiff & Whitehead, 2019). Such pedagogical approaches provide students with opportunities to develop their critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative skills, while also fostering a sense of responsibility towards sustainable development. By integrating the Theory of Active Citizenship Education into the repositioning of Social Studies education in Nigeria, educators and policymakers can create a framework that nurtures socially conscious and active citizens who are committed to sustainable national development.

The Role of Social Studies Education for sustainable National Development

It has been ascertained that Social Studies play significant role in national development. The basic role is that the concepts affect each other in many ways. The role of Social Studies in national development can be seen in the inculcation of skill, the acquisition of these skills and the application no doubt brings about development in society. The repositioning of the citizens to functionally contribute to national development and nation building are the core objectives of the Social Studies. Against this background, Amatti (1993) stated that many nations used Social Studies to achieve specific national goals. Social Studies programme in Nigeria at all levels is aimed at achieving national integration, national consciousness and national development, through the positive values that learners are exposed to.

Social Studies through its content structure expose national and international values, which broadens knowledge, experience, social interaction skills and intellectual output. In support, Joof, Mezieobi and Amadi (1994) maintained that Social Studies play important role in national development in that it equips the learner with the skills and capabilities for independent problem solving and exposing the learner to make input in knowledge

development through their own generalisations, skills of creativity and independent thinking. Social Studies aims at helping people develop the ability to make decisions so that they can shape public policy by participating in intelligent social actions. In this regard, man's social life and various activities of social relations in communities are examined. In another dimension, Nwakoby (1988) reported that the federal government proposes that Social Studies should be a means of achieving creativity, self-reliance and independence of mind, nationalist outlook and freedom from mental colonisation. Creativity, self-reliance and spirit of social acceptance are conditions to promote national integration, national unity and national development.

The role of Social Studies in national development has been succinctly summarised by Obro (2007) as follows:

1. Good Citizenship: For growth and stability of a country, that country needs good citizens. Citizenship education is one of the contents taught in Social Studies. Students are enlightened on their rights and responsibilities to the Nigerian state. Through the teaching and inculcation of good citizenship, Social Studies help to build citizens who will perform their legal, civic and unsolicited obligations to the nation as a whole. It must be emphasized that the level of development of any nation depends solely on its citizens.

2. Development of National Consciousness: The citizens of a nation should not see themselves first from the perspective of their different tribes, states, region, before the perspective of their nation. This is because they are supposed to see themselves as the citizens of the nation to which they belong. Social studies help to develop national consciousness in the citizens (students) hence it teaches those things that promotes national consciousness such as national anthem, national pledge, national symbols and their interpretations. These are taught right from the primary school so that when the child grows old, he will not forget so easily.

3. Creation of Awareness: Social Studies expose the students to the different resources of one's country and where they are located. It also teaches the rational use and conservation of these resources for the country development.

4. Knowledge of Significant Development in Human Societies: The knowledge of past events enables the citizens to have knowledge of how to prevent such happenings in the present and able to project to the future; to build a better and a trouble free society thereby bring about national development.

5. Fostering of National Unity: Social integration and national unity is another way in which Social Studies contribute to national development. When other cultures are exposed to the child, it makes way for cultural accommodation, high level of tolerance, reduction in religious intolerance and conflicts of various magnitudes.

6. Moral Education and Development: Moral education and development are aspects of Social Studies education. No nation attains great heights in national development without a crop of morally responsible citizens, who place national pride and dignity over self. Good

moral education is a must to achieve stable society, especially where societal norms, moral code of conduct are put in place and recognised.

Conclusion

Social Studies is a veritable instrument for national and economic development. Repositioning Social Studies education as a mechanism for sustainable national development in Nigeria is crucial for building an informed, active, and responsible citizenry. By emphasizing citizenship education, promoting national unity, and addressing socio-economic challenges, Social Studies education can contribute significantly to Nigeria's sustainable development goals. Through curriculum enhancement, teacher professional development, community engagement, and the integration of technology, Nigeria can ensure the effective repositioning of Social Studies education to shape a better future for the nation. Therefore, repositioning social studies education as a mechanism for sustainable national development is crucial for equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to actively participate in addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges and contribute to Nigeria's sustainable future.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that;

1. Government should show positive commitment to the effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum.
2. Social studies education curriculum should be made to take cognizance of important changes and challenges in the environment and prepares the learners to meet such challenges. The social studies curriculum should be revised periodically and updated with critical, national and international issues in economic management.
3. Social Studies should be strengthened as a catalyst for the advancement of national development.
4. Social Studies should be used as pilot in actualizing national development.
5. Social Studies as course of study in the school curriculum should be made compulsory to all students in the junior and senior secondary schools in the country.
6. The teaching of Social Studies should be entrusted in the hands of professionally trained Social Studies educationist who would utilize the appropriate methods, strategies, techniques and resources germane to effective Social Studies education implementation.
7. The Social Studies teacher must on constant basis, recharge his professional skills, competences through regular exposure to professional development activity, via workshops, conferences and seminar.

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