



The Role of Social Studies Education in the Economic Recovery and Stability of Nigeria

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Abstract

The role of Social Studies Education in the economic recovery and stability of Nigeria is in impacting positively on individuals in society so as to make them effective and patriotic citizens that would uphold the positive values of peaceful co-existence, togetherness, tolerance, peaceful democratic participation, unity, honesty, hard work, accountability and responsible behaviour and living in society. The paper focuses on a brief history of Social Studies Education in Nigeria, the economic situation in Nigeria and the role of Social Studies Education in the economic recovery and stability of Nigeria. Social Studies promotes individuals' desire for self-reliance, national sufficiency and stability, hard-work and self-employment, entrepreneurial education, positive change in society's perception of poverty and wealth creation, achievement of vocational skills and socio-political values in society.

Keywords: Social Studies Education, Nigeria's Economy, Economic Growth, Economic Recovery, Socio-Economic Stability.

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INTRODUCTION

From the inception of Social Studies in Nigeria, the subject has been used for correcting social ills in society and for solving social problems, both at societal and personal levels of individuals in society. Social Studies Education came to Nigeria at its formal inauguration at the Aiyetoro Comprehensive High School programme in 1963 in Egbado, Ogun State. However, there are those who think Social Studies awareness started as far back as 1956 in Northern Nigeria (Yusuf, 2017) and 1958 in Western Nigeria (Edinyang, Unimke, Ubi, Opoh & Iwok, 2015; Otse, 2017; Yusuf, 2017). This was regarded as the first attempt at establishing the “Ohio Project”, prior to 1963.

The Ohio State University in the United States of America (USA) sponsored the training of some Nigerians in a Social Studies programme to qualify as Social Studies teachers in Colleges of Education in the Western region and the term ‘Social Studies’ was first used by them (Augustine, 2009; Obebe, 2011, cited in Edinyang, Unimke, Ubi, Opoh & Iwok, 2015; Otse, 2017; Sofadekan, 2012). It was however short-lived and not until 1963 before another project of this kind was initiated in Egbado at the Aiyetoro Comprehensive High School by the Ford Foundation which provided funds, in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Harvard University of the United States of America also provided human resources for the programme. Adewuya (2010, cited in Augustine, 2009) reiterated that the first Ohio programme created the first awareness of Social Studies in Nigeria in terms of concept because they had no schools to disseminate the rubrics of the subject prior to 1963.

Factors that led to the teaching of Social Studies after independence was primarily due to the Nigerian civil war; and the need to include the national aspirations of Nigerians in the teaching of the subject for national integration. Thus, in 1964 the Ahmadu Bello University introduced Social Studies under the affiliation of the University of Wisconsin, USA. The extensive introduction of Social Studies in Nigerian schools through the Northern Education Board and the Aiyetoro Comprehensive High School in Nigeria was done in 1963 through the provision of text materials for classes 1 & 2 by Ford Foundation and the Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre (CESAC), Lagos. The Ministry of Education also prepared syllabi for the teaching of Social Studies in secondary school classes 1 and 2. The 1969 National Curriculum Conference, organised by the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC) in Lagos saw the regularization of social studies as a subject in the Curriculum.

The development of Social Studies in Nigeria was aimed at eliminating colonial education content and replacing it with indigenous education content, which seeks to solve social problems of the society through the inculcation of social values and positive attitudes (Augustine, 2009; Yusuf, 2017, p. 23). Social Studies was seen as a means of instilling national consciousness, effective citizenship, national unity and reconstruction (Adaralagbe, 1972). The national objectives of Nigeria therefore seek to realize the development of the individual, society and the national economy which in a wider context deals with socio-economic and political life of the society (Nwafor, 2014).

Promotion of economic development and self-reliance through the teaching of tolerance, togetherness, patriotism and unity in Social Studies Education in Nigeria fosters national understanding, socio-economic development and recovery as well as stability. Social Studies does emphasize the values of good and responsible living, accountability and hard work. However, in contemporary Nigeria, many are stricken with the ‘get-rich-quick’ syndrome and embraced corruption wholeheartedly. Corruption is regarded as the most devastating vice that is draining the Nigerian economy and thus the elimination of corruption in the society through the teaching of Social Studies’ positive attitudes and values help to

eradicate corrupt practices in society. Economic development can only be achieved through peace and tranquillity, economic stability and hard work. Social vices militating against democracy, economic recovery, self-reliance and stability are identified as dishonesty, disloyalty and misuse of offices and public funds among others (Osalusi, 2014). This makes Social Studies the most effective tool for eradicating such vices and promoting the needed social, economic and democratic values in society so as to enable individuals and the society at large to change their attitude towards social vices like corruption, violence and laziness to achieve economic recovery and stability.

The Status Quo of the Nigerian Economy

The Nigerian economy has suffered adverse effects from corrupt practices of individuals and organisations as the case may be. A report by Price Waterhouse Coopers Nigeria ([PWC], 2016) purported corruption in Nigeria to have engulfed about 37% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP); and may likely continue to do so if drastic steps are not taken to reduce its impact on the Nigerian economy (Gibson, 2017). In 2016 Nigeria suffered a devastating economic crisis which was regarded as the worst recession in Nigerian history. This was exacerbated by the level of corruption in the society, especially in public service. Gibson (2017) posited that Nigeria suffers low economic productivity as a result of over-dependency in crude oil, low agricultural investment, low industrialization, corruption, which has greatly reduced productivity in Nigeria. As a result looting of public funds, illegal acquisition of wealth by public servants and unemployment has made the production index ratio of Nigeria the lowest in the world.

The percentage reduction in Nigeria's GDP is estimated to be about \$2,000 *per capita* cost by the year 2030 if the present corruption trend is not checked immediately (PWC, 2016). In 2016, economic output dwindled by 1.8% and external reserves deteriorated to \$27 billion. The exchange rate also increased to N493 per dollar in the foreign exchange market (Mailafia, 2017). Presently the dollar sells for N356 and Nigeria's public debt rose to an unprecedented 5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Inflation rate rose to 18.9% in 2016, 18.7% in 2017 and came down to 15.1% in January, 2018 (Bouzanis, 2018). According to Heritage Foundation (2018) Nigeria's economic indices stands at a population of 183.6 million, a GDP of 1.1 trillion, a GDP growth rate of 2.7%, a compound annual GDP growth rate of 3.4%, a *per capita* income of \$5,942, a foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow of \$4.4 billion and an economic freedom of 58.5% which ranks Nigeria as the 104th globally and 12th out of 47 in the sub-Sahara African region in the 2018 Economic Freedom Index (EFI).

In 2016 the low global oil prices battered the petroleum driven economy and grossly reduced Nigeria's economic growth as well as development. This made the heavily petroleum dependent economy to revert to agriculture, though 60% of the population still lives in abject poverty. This made the country to suffer budget deficits, which averaged 3.4% of the GDP and State debt increased to a peak of 10% and 18.6% between 2015 and 2017. Inflation rate soared in 2016 and made it necessary for the government to cook up monetary and fiscal policies with an individual income tax rate of 24%, corporate tax of 30% and the total tax burden of 9% (Consult, 2017, Heritage Foundation, 2018). The Federal Government generated an economic growth plan for 2016 to 2020 which includes external balancing of economic growth and diversification to kick-start economic recovery and stability through agriculture, food security, local and small business enterprises (Consult, 2017).

The economic situation of Nigeria in 2016, as noted by Gabriel, Anaeto, Nwabughio, Elebeke and Onorji (2016) was a case for serious concern as there was high inflation rate, unemployment crisis, low GDP and capital importation among others. The indices of youth unemployment attained a 70% ratio in the North-East and North-West geo-

political zones in Nigeria and also affected the Nigerian economy drastically (Mailafia, 2017). The crises in the North and Middle Belt as a result of the Boko Haram and the attacks on farmers by the cattle herdsman aggravated an already complicated economy. On top of that, oil prices fell and the monthly allocation to most states dwindled, with many states claiming inability to pay salaries. There was a huge backlog of salaries debt by some states, many of which failed to pay up even after several bailout funds from the Federal Government. World Bank (2017) analysed Nigeria's recent misalignments of its exchange rate and current trade policies and reported that these have impeded the country's economic growth. In acquiescence, Dogara (2018) observed that unemployment, poverty and inequality have continued to take their toll on the already beleaguered people with issues of exchange rate, stability, high inflation rate and inadequate fiscal response and increased the nation's misery index.

Inability of the Government to meet up with general expectation of citizens has also led to uprisings among some groups in Nigeria demanding for what they feel entitled to in the country (Gibson, 2017). These conflicts have created more chaos for both the leadership and citizens of Nigeria and impacted negatively on the economy and the social stability of the society as Nigeria's economy is a far cry from what it used to be. God has endowed Nigeria with so much wealth, though most of it is purported to be grossly inadequate for development due to corruption and low investment rate. For one thing, the level of waste has increased with each successive government. The North is regarded as the highest producer of agricultural produce in the country, but the activities of the Boko Haram have completely incapacitated parts of the North from engaging in farming activities. These have all had their toll on the nation's socio-economic stability and affected the economy in the following ways:

- Low tax-based revenue;
- Insufficient government expenditure, especially on education;
- Insufficient revenue;
- Weak investment rate both at the local and Direct Foreign Investment (DFI) levels;
- Increased inequality and poverty levels;
- Increased inflation rate;
- Low economic growth;
- Slow development;
- Low income *per capita*; and
- Continuous, vicious cycle of poverty.

However, Social Studies Education, as an affective based discipline, can be used to achieve economic recovery and stability in Nigeria.

Role of Social Studies in the Economic Recovery and Stability of Nigeria

The role of Social Studies in fostering economic recovery and stability can be seen in various endeavours:

Desire for Self-Reliance, National Sufficiency and Stability

Social Studies Education in Nigeria plays the role of fostering the desire for self-reliance, national sufficiency and national pride (Abubakar, 2013; Osalusi, 2014). Ogundare (1991) examined the goals and objectives of social studies education to determine their consistency with the goals and objectives of Mass Mobilization for Self-Reliance, Social Justice, and

Economic Recovery (MAMSER), and found them to be consistent in giving rise to self-reliance in the society. Musawa (2016) pointed out that oil accounts for 80% of government revenue and 90% of Nigeria's export and cautioned the need to look beyond oil. Social Studies inculcate the value of self-reliance and national sufficiency which can lead to economic recovery and stability.

Promotion of Hard Work and Self-Employment

Social Studies Education promotes hard work and self-employment among individuals in society. Social Studies inculcate the values of hard work, self-reliance and employment through the inculcation of the right values and attitude towards agriculture and other vocations for self-employment and self-reliance. Osalusi (2014) contends that the teaching of social studies makes self-reliance attainable in Nigeria. Honesty and hard work are core values inculcated on the younger generation in Nigeria. Honesty and hard work among citizens will eventually eradicate corrupt practices among Nigerians and instil economic recovery and stability.

Promotion of Entrepreneurial Education

Entrepreneurship Education is part of traditional education in Nigeria, especially in the Eastern part of Nigeria among the Igbos. Social Studies being the study of man in his social environment deals with the study of man's business life as well. Concept of entrepreneurial education appropriately integrated into the Social Studies Education curriculum at the secondary and tertiary levels promotes self-employment and economic stability. This would create job opportunities and eradicate the high level of unemployment, poverty and crimes in the society (Mezieobi, Ogangwu, Ossai & Young, 2013). It would also boost the level of economic growth and development in the country (Orisa, 2012).

Changing Society's Perception of Poverty and Wealth Creation

Poverty alleviation education in Nigeria is aimed at eradicating the high level of poverty in the country as Nigeria and other countries, by exposing learners to the values of self-reliance, discipline, honesty, hard-work, creativity and skills to improve the national economy. It is unfortunate to note that many people in Nigeria see public offices and funds as their gateway to wealth and that poverty is tantamount to honesty and doing the right thing. Ajala (2002, p.189) observed that many politicians know that they play dirty but appear to concede to it and give impression to the youth that it is a profitable business and seemed to also think that their positions were conferred on them with the legitimate justification to use contracts as sources of income for themselves and their political parties. Osalusi (2014, p. 2531) observed that a man can be a complete failure in life in spite of his 'other' successes if he lacks good character and qualities such as honesty, diligence, patriotism and humility, which are essential to true success in life. Therefore the role of Social Studies in economic recovery and stability in Nigeria is making positive contributions towards self-reliance as Social Studies is capable of correcting these imbalances in peoples' perceptions.

Akosile (2007) cited in Kabir (2014) explained the increasing social problems among teenagers in Nigeria as a manifestation of unemployment, which has generated incessant violence across the nation. In acquiescence, Obateru (1994, cited in Kabir 2014) also asserts that the level of poverty in Nigeria is responsible for the violence among teenagers as unemployment, inadequate housing, poor physical and social infrastructures prevail. Okafor (2005, p. 31) aptly asserted that:

Nigerian elites have generally sought power as a means of advancing their economic interests as they have used state power to gain access to a share of profitable opportunities and the finance necessary to establish themselves.

He went further to reiterate that the “*neo-colonial political leadership which lacked economic power saw in the State an opportunity to amass wealth and consequently lacked the moral right to compel the followers to restrain from corruption*” (Okafor 2005, p. 32).

The love for immense and quick acquisition of wealth, regardless of the source, has made the youth lazy, disrespectful, cold blooded and calculating. Ojie (2007) lamented that Nigeria is clearly one of the typical countries in the sub-Saharan Africa with the problem of poverty reduction, alleviation and education. Social Studies, therefore, teach the values of hard work, patience, honesty and perseverance. These values would help Nigerians to imbibe honest work, living and prosperity and adopt the right attitude towards work, wealth creation and poverty.

Achievement of Vocational Objectives in the Social Studies Education

Social studies employ collaborative instruction and learning which involves relevant activities and instruction to inculcate skills and values to young learners in society. Social Studies Education incorporates concepts on contemporary issues in Nigeria into the curriculum and inculcates these through Information and Communication Technology (ICT), which enables learners to access useful information for social living. Mezieobi and Tamuno (2017, p. 102) described contemporary issues as sensitive emerging issues in the Nigerian society that calls for national attention, such as increasing poverty, prostitution, kidnapping, political violence, herdsmen violent clashes with farmers across the state of Nigeria, amongst others. Such vocations as ICT skills, agrarian practices, home economics, simple business education skills and other relevant skills can be acquired through such vocational studies as depicted by contemporary issues in Social Studies Education. These vocational objectives in social Studies Education are educational values that would acquaint learners and citizens with social skills and national consciousness to improve the quality of life in their domains (Mezieobi & Tamuno, 2017, p. 103). These would help to revamp the economy through self-employment in terms of Nigeria’s GDP and income *per capita* as well as raising standard of living nationally.

Promotion of Socio-Political Values Education

Social Studies Education inculcates values to the learners and citizens in order to develop effective citizenship. Mezieobi, Ogaugwu, Ossai and Young (2013, p. 102) proposed values integration in the Social Studies curriculum content at the tertiary level to mitigate against greed, corruption, leadership ineptitude, nepotism, god-fatherism, and other vices that have debased Nigeria’s moral integrity and democratic existence as a dignified nation. Orisa (2012) also proposed the inculcation of social values as what Nigeria needs to change from her current corrupt and poverty propensities to life of purity and make a complete U-turn from materialism, moral decadence, false sense of value, tribal feud, religious intolerance, social injustice, economic sabotage to a new national re-orientation of excellence, merit, dignity and intrinsic worth of human life as the basis of Nigeria’s value system. Social Studies curriculum should focus on constructing moral personality which requires many

strategies and techniques in teaching methods, skills, and knowledge to create and sustain social values (Mezieobi, Ogaugwu, Ossai, & Young, 2013).

Socio-political values deals with peace, tolerance and peaceful co-existence amongst other values. The achievement of these values in Social Studies promotes social and political stability which creates the enabling environment for economic recovery and stability in Nigeria. Socio-political values deals with honest democratic values, socio-economic and political stability, peaceful co-existence, tolerance, unity, togetherness, patriotism as well as nation building. Democracy cannot survive the 21st century with extreme poverty and violence, which if not eliminated would hinder economic recovery and stability (Dogara, 2018).

CONCLUSION/SUGGESTIONS

Given the economic situation in Nigeria, the economy is over-dependent on the oil sector and in a recess caused by the greed of politicians and corrupt practices of individuals in public service. This is an indication of the lack of values amongst individuals in the society as a result of the looting of public funds, budget padding, oil bunkering and the non-execution of awarded contracts. These increased the cash flow of money in circulation and exacerbated inflation in the country. With the naira getting more and more devalued coupled with the fall of oil price in dollars per barrel, low external reserve, low investment and productivity ratio, Nigeria needs to improve not only its GDP, but per capita income as well. The economy can improve through food security which can be boosted by agriculture, small and medium businesses through consistent investment and production.

Nigerian economic indices are all running in low ratios except inflation and unemployment, which are running at a galloping speed. There is therefore every indication that the Nigerian economy is in dire need of economic recovery to stabilize the ever dwindling resources that have been grossly wasted by the corrupt practices of public servants, politicians, organisations and individuals in society. Most of this economic waste was as a result of bad leadership, bad policy and decision-making; and mismanagement. It all hinges back on the contemporary issue of lack of values in society as values influences the mind-sets of people and in turn their actions and attitudes.

Social Studies Education deals with citizenship education, which is basically the first goal of teaching Social Studies in Nigeria. However, the widespread of social vices in society portrays the enormity of the lack of the sense of values amongst citizens in society. It is this lack of the sense of values that leaves the society bereft of justice, honesty, hard work and accountability. For social studies to help Nigeria achieve economic recovery and stability, citizens and especially politicians should be held accountable for their actions such as anti-graft action to bring them to book. The inculcation and imbibing of desirable values would help citizens to become responsible and patriotic citizens who would be patriotic enough to not want to loot public funds but rather be accountable for their actions. People with the right attitudes and values would promote the spirit of togetherness; religious tolerance, peaceful co-existence and unity to uphold sound socio-political values and socio-economic and political stability. Young learners can acquire social learning in social studies to enable them acquire affective competences for peaceful coexistence and relationship. These values promote peace and stability which provides the enabling environment for economic activities. This way economic recovery and stability can be achieved through Social Studies Education. The nation's fiscal and monetary policies should be reviewed as well.

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