

Social Studies Curriculum as an Instrument for Enhancing Social Stability and National Development in a Democratic Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examines the role of the Social Studies curriculum as a vital instrument for enhancing social stability and national development in democratic Nigeria. Recognizing education's global significance, the paper highlights how an effectively implemented Social Studies curriculum can equip learners with the necessary knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes for societal development. It explores the curriculum's components, objectives, content, methods, resources, evaluation techniques and their collective contribution to shaping responsible citizens. The study also discusses the curriculum's potential to foster civic responsibility, democratic principles, and cultural appreciation, thereby promoting unity and social stability. Additionally, the paper deployed the social contract theory as the theoretical underpinning for the study, emphasizing the curriculum's role in legitimizing government and encouraging citizen participation in national development. The paper concluded that a well-structured Social Studies curriculum can significantly address Nigeria's socio-political challenges, fostering a peaceful, stable, and developed nation. The paper recommended that teachers should be constantly trained and retrained to be better equipped and positioned to implement the curriculum.

Keywords: Social Studies, Curriculum, Social Stability, National Development, Democratic Nigeria

Introduction

Education holds a globally recognized significance, and in Nigeria, it is widely viewed as an essential foundation for fostering skilled manpower, fostering economic prosperity, and enhancing the well-being of its citizens. Education is considered a fundamental means of imparting the necessary knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes crucial for contributing to Social Stability and national development.

Tsaku (2019) posits that education is perceived as a tool to empower individuals, enabling them to make a positive impact on their communities. This is seen as a crucial foundation for societal advancement and the enhancement of living conditions. According to Umar (2014), teachers play crucial roles in shaping the younger generation, particularly at the foundational levels of education, utilizing the school curriculum as a powerful tool. The Social Studies curriculum, when strategically implemented, can serve as a potent means to drive social stability and national development within the context of Nigeria as a democratic nation.

How to Cite

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Social Studies Curriculum

The curriculum according to Okafor (2024), serves as the central core of any educational program, wielding significant influence over the success or failure of the entire Educational initiative. The careful selection and effective implementation of curriculum content play pivotal roles in determining the outcome of an educational program. Indeed, the calibre of a curriculum directly mirrors the quality of the educational system it represents. Gbamanja (2015) asserts that the curriculum is the totality of the learning experience to which learners are exposed. It contains a prescribed course of studies which students must learn to reach a certain level of education. Osakwe, (2019) defined curriculum as the sum of selected, organized, integrated, innovative and evaluative educational exposure and experiences provided to students. These educational experiences might be provided consciously or unconsciously under the school authority to achieve the designated learning outcomes.

The curriculum functions as the means through which the overarching educational philosophy of a nation is transformed from abstract principles into tangible, real-world applications. It serves as the vehicle for translating educational ideals into practical reality, shaping the educational experiences of learners.

This researcher contends that the effectiveness and influence of any educational initiative are closely linked to the deliberate planning and implementation of its curriculum. The Social Studies curriculum serves as a potent instrument through which nations, including Nigeria, can promote social stability and propel national development. Akinola (2014) defined Social Studies as the study of the outcomes of interactions between humans and their environment which equips the youths with the necessary tools for solving personal and community-related problems. It is crucial to recognize that Social Studies goes beyond imparting knowledge; it also underscores the importance of instilling skills necessary for resolving issues within society or communities.

Oyesikun (2015) underscores the significance of the Social Studies curriculum as a veritable instrument for shaping the mindset of citizens and fostering social stability and national development in Nigeria as a nation. The Social Studies curriculum comprises key components such as objectives, contents, methods, resources, and evaluation, which collectively contribute to effective instruction within the school system.

The stated components of the Social Studies curriculum serve as integral elements for achieving educational goals. According to Shehu, (2016), objectives delineate the intended outcomes, while contents encompass essential information and knowledge. The methods employed in teaching, along with the resources utilized, play crucial roles in facilitating a comprehensive learning experience. Evaluation processes ensure the effectiveness of the Social Studies curriculum and student comprehension.

It is the opinion of this researcher that the successful implementation of the Social Studies curriculum in schools in Nigeria holds the potential to significantly contribute to social stability and national development in Nigeria. Social Studies curriculum helps in instilling a sense of civic responsibility and promoting a deeper understanding of democratic principles, it plays a pivotal role in shaping the future citizens of the country. In essence, Social Studies is a dynamic force for addressing social challenges and fostering stability within Nigerian society.

Social Stability

Social stability refers to the state of equilibrium and order within a society, where individuals and groups can interact and function without major disruptions, conflicts, or upheavals. Falade (2021) opined that Social stability is the primary concern of a discipline such as Social Studies Education. It's characterized by a sense of predictability, continuity, and a generally peaceful coexistence among members of the society. Social stability is a crucial aspect of a functioning and healthy society, as it provides the foundation for economic development, cultural advancement, and individual well-being.

Social instability according to Nweke (2023) thrives in social conflicts and crises, thereby leaving an affected society to degenerate to the undesirable level of socio-political quagmire. Social stability is the degree to which a society and its institutions remain predictable and reliable. This is important because it allows participants in society such as individuals and groups to plan and conduct their affairs without disruption.

It is common for sociologists to state or assume that stability is a primary or, in some cases the only goal of society. Social stability cannot be achieved in an atmosphere of crisis and violence. Societal peace is a major prerequisite for social stability. Social Studies curriculum contributes significantly to social stability, this is because the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge acquired using the instrumentality of Social Studies curriculum implementation effectively enhance stability in society.

National Development

Gboyega (2018) defined development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the condition of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in the material condition or well-being of all citizens, not the most powerful and the rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future.

According to Mezieobi (2014), development is a social condition within a nation in which the authentic needs of its population are satisfied by the rational and sustainable use of natural resources and systems. This includes the specification that social groups have access to organizations, basic services, and nutrition and above all education, housing, health services and respect for the culture and tradition of the people within the social framework of a particular country. In economic terms, this definition indicates that for the population of a country, there are educational opportunities, employment opportunities, satisfaction of basic needs and advancement of national wealth. In a political sense, this definition emphasizes that government systems have legitimacy not only in terms of the law but also in terms of providing social benefits for the majority of the population. In a cultural sense, the definition holds that the way of life of the people is respected and integrated into the development process.

Development is a process of bringing about fundamental and sustainable changes in the society. It transcends as well as encompasses growth and embraces such aspects of the quality of life as social justice, equality of opportunity for all citizens, equitable distribution of income and democratization of the development process (Adedeji 1997). According to Harris (2014), development is a holistic process of changing and becoming better advanced or causing society to change in this way. It involves both socio-economic, political, cultural, educational, and infrastructural advancement and improvement. The World Bank, (2015) defined national development as the ability of a country to improve the social welfare of the people. This can be done by providing social amenities like quality education, potable water, medical care, transportation infrastructure and the like.

Mezieobi (2014) opined that a Social Studies curriculum if properly implemented will enable learners to acquire the necessary values, skills, attitudes, knowledge and experiences needed to function effectively in society and contribute tremendously to Social Stability and national development in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the social contract theory propounded by Locke in Manzoor (2024). The Social contract theory argues that a government's legitimacy comes from the consent of the governed. People give up some freedoms in exchange for the government protecting their natural rights (life, liberty, property) and promoting the common good. Social stability stems from a strong social contract, where citizens feel their rights are protected and their voices are heard. National development is more likely to occur in democratic nations where citizens believe they have a stake in the system. Such democratic structures enhance the likelihood of citizens participating

and contribute to social stability and national development. The Social Studies curriculum is a veritable tool for the inculcation of democratic values necessary for social stability and national development in Nigeria as a nation.

Social Studies Curriculum as an Instrument for Social Stability and National Development

Social Studies curriculum across the world and in Nigeria in particular is perceived as a corrective discipline whose main emphasis is on the overall development of the child helping him develop the skills needed for national development. Social Studies is seen as a discipline that helps students become responsible citizens in a culturally diverse world.

Social Studies is an organized integrated study of man and his environment both physical and social, emphasizing cognition, functional skills and desirable attitude and action to produce an effective citizen (Grace, 2010). David and Tandu, (2015) opined that Social Studies was introduced into the school curricula because of the need for all-round citizenship training, the emerging quest for national integration, nation-building and national development. The introduction of Social Studies in Nigeria was mainly to inculcate the concept of nationalism, unity in diversity and interdependence among the citizens of the nation.

Right from its introduction in the curriculum of Nigerian schools, the potential of the Social Studies programme to promote the values and ethics of inter-ethnic understanding has never been in doubt. Garba, (2013) states that the content of social studies education attempts to forge unity, and interdependence among the people of Nigeria, thereby fostering inter-ethnic understanding which is essential to the development of Nigeria as a nation. Social Studies is fundamentally aimed at helping young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for public good in a culturally diverse society such as Nigeria (Grace, 2010).

David and Tandu, (2015) stated that Nigeria is inhabited by a large number of ethnic groups ranging in size, from a few thousand to many millions, between them, with over three hundred and fifty languages and ethnic nationalities. Thus, right from independence in 1960, the country has been preoccupied with how to achieve a reasonable level of national unity or inter-ethnic understanding and cooperation which will bring about much-needed peace, unity and development.

Social studies education plays a very vital role in developing rational thinking ability for practical social life, promoting political literacy, and encouraging democratic values and principles for the promotion of functional citizenship. Arisi, (2011) considers the knowledge taught in Social Studies as essential for worthwhile living and promotion of national development in Nigeria. This is based on the fact that much of the content of the knowledge in Social Studies is drawn from the realities of the learners' environment. This will enable the students in their formative years to have a better understanding of the developmental needs of Nigeria as a nation.

Okafor (2024) advocates for the social sensitivity philosophy in Social Studies education, emphasizing its role in empowering educators and practitioners to recognize and address societal problems, particularly those related to social stability and national development in Nigeria. This approach encourages a contextual understanding of problems and promotes the formulation of effective solutions using the instrumentality of Social Studies Education.

In the framework of Social Studies instruction, each topic or unit is designed to present learners with one or more societal issues, compelling them to engage in problem-solving. The essence of Social Studies education lies in its focus on the social issues affecting humanity and the exploration of meaningful avenues for resolving these challenges. This philosophy According to Gbamanja (2015) underscores the importance of cultivating a socially conscious mindset among students and instilling in them the skills to actively contribute to the betterment of society.

Social studies is a key subject, especially in helping Nigeria address the lingering problem of national development. It, therefore, has an uphill task to educate the young ones and instil in them the consciousness of social responsibility, equity and equality and of one indivisible and progressive nation with one philosophy and destiny. Social Studies brings to the fore the Nigerian way of life. The awareness of the Nigerian way of life will help the student become good citizens, citizens who will be society-centred rather than self-centred, Citizens who have developed the spirit of communal living, who are useful to themselves and the society in which they live well-equipped to contribute to its development.

Agreeing with the above assertion Ayuba (2019), opined that the Social Studies curriculum acts as a foundation for fostering informed and responsible citizenship. By imparting knowledge about the country's history, governance structures, and civic responsibilities, it equips students with the tools needed to actively participate in the democratic process. Mariam (2021) opined that Nigeria's diverse cultural landscape can be a source of strength when properly understood and appreciated. Social Studies helps students explore and appreciate the rich cultural tapestry of the nation, fostering unity and mutual respect among different ethnic and religious groups this has the potential to enhance social stability and national development in Nigeria as a nation.

According to Ayuba (2019), Social Studies education encourages critical thinking skills, enabling students to analyze societal issues and propose innovative solutions. This skill set is crucial for addressing challenges and driving sustainable development at the national level. The Social Studies curriculum emphasizes ethical values, emphasizing the importance of integrity, empathy, and social responsibility. These values According to Mezieobi (2014) form the bedrock of a just and equitable society, contributing to social stability and national development. Social Studies has the potential to foster an entrepreneurial mindset among students, catalyzing economic development. Through the integration of economic principles and practical skills into the curriculum, students can be equipped with the tools necessary to contribute to innovation and entrepreneurship. From the researcher's perspective, the Social Studies curriculum plays a pivotal role in not only enhancing social stability but also driving national development in Nigeria.

Conclusion

It has been established that Social Studies Education is a vital tool that can be used to develop appropriate behaviour, skills and attitudes necessary for effective citizenship which are fundamental for social stability and the development of society. This is particularly true in the context of Nigeria, where the role of Social Studies education in fostering social stability and societal progress and development cannot be overstated.

Recommendations

- Social Studies teachers should be encouraged and supported to thoroughly understand and familiarize themselves with the contents of the Basic Education Social Studies curriculum. Emphasis should be placed on key areas such as attitudes, values, skills, and competencies, stressing their significance for Social stability, national unity, integration, and development.
- Continuous Professional Development for Social Studies Teachers should be encouraged. Regular training and retraining programs for Social Studies teachers focused on the effective implementation of curriculum content should be implemented. These programs should cover not only theoretical knowledge but also practical strategies for teaching and assessing the identified crucial areas of attitudes, values, skills, and competencies.

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