

# SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AS AN HYPOTHETICAL REMEDY FOR SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *Social ills are the greatest menaces that plague the country Nigeria for a long time. It has eaten deep into the Nigerian fabric and has affected the rate of development of the country to a large extent that it drives the wheels of national progress backward. It has attacked and crippled our home, institutions, industries, ministries and even churches. It is a cancer that contaminates all strata of the socio-political and economic structure of any society. This paper takes a look at some of the social problems ravaging the country. It also looks at the means through which Social Studies education can contribute to the eradication of these menaces and makes some suggestions which taken will help to put an end to the social ills in the country.*

**Key Words:** *Social Studies, Social Studies Education, Hypothetic remedy, Social problems*

## Introduction

The evolution of social studies as a subject has been a recent development when compared to other subjects in the educational system of many countries of the world. The United States of America is the mother country of Social Studies as a result of historical development of America which is full of many social problems like racial discrimination of blacks and white Americans, as we are having ethnicity problem in Nigeria. Social Studies is thus seeing as a tool for national unity and solution to social problems (Shamija, 2008).

Nigeria also being a plural linguistic and plural religious nation with diverse cultures whose characteristics are similar to that of American curriculum by including social studies in their curriculum. This is in line with the philosophy and goals of our country as stipulated in the (National Policy on Education, 2004), that education has to be geared towards self realization of better human relationship, individual and national efficiency.

National Policy on Education (2004) affirms that, for a 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 above philosophy then made the Nigeria society to make Social Studies a teaching subject which will be used as a tool for the preservation of the stated predetermined objectives with the eradication of social vices inclusive.

## Social Studies in Nigeria

Social Studies in Nigeria is still at infancy and precisely it was introduced into the Nigeria educational system about four decades ago. It was introduced ostensibly to correct the abnormalities and decadence or deficiencies of the colonial educational system. It was to accomplish this through the inculcation of desirable values and attitudes in our youths, which will facilitate national unity and integration and also to eliminate all those vices that were inimical to national development. Social Studies in Nigeria is a new innovation in education, especially when we talk about the breaking of the traditional subjects like History and Geography with the introduction of Social Studies, the idea of isolating traditional subject was overlooked to some extent. The reason is that knowledge is being studied as a whole in Social Studies unlike other social sciences subjects (Shamija, 2011).

## The Concept of Social Studies

It is a difficult task to give a concise and universally acceptable definition of the concept of Social Studies. This is due to the divergence in the background of those defining, in addition to which Social Studies as a discipline is still in the process of organizing and reopening itself. This notwithstanding, various attempts have been made to capture its meaning. According to Dubey & Barth (1980), Social Studies is a process of education, which utilizes the study of human life for the purpose of giving children the opportunities to practice solving problem of crucial importance for both the individual and society. The

skills obtained in the process of study will add transfer values to the lives of children so that the decision they make as mature citizens will be useful to them and the Nigeria society.

Kissock (1981) says Social Studies is a programmer of study which society uses to instill in students the knowledge, skill, attitude and actions it considers important concerning the relationship human beings have with each other, their world and themselves.

Adaralegbe (1982) defines Social Studies as “a problem approach discipline through which man studies and learn about problems of survival in his environment. It is an inter-disciplinary study of a topic, a problem and issue, a concern or an inspiration, it is a study of how man influences and in turn is influenced by his physical, social, political, economic, psychological, cultural, scientific and technological environment”.

The above indicates that, Social Studies gives an opportunity for important social and moral questions thereby giving the pupils/ individuals an early opportunity of knowing about the problems of the society, studying them in-depth and doing something practical to help through community service. This would help in broadening their outlook, giving them a motive for work and perhaps helping them become better human beings.

As Social Studies view man as an integrated being it could be used to purge the ills of the society and make the future of Nigeria a better one through capable teachers teaching our youths. Social Studies tries to make youth good citizen by inculcating in them certain qualities like cooperation, loyalty, discipline, dedication, faithfulness, honesty, moral and social responsibilities, knowledge and skills tolerance and natural understanding . All these and more would prepare them for useful living within the society.

### **The Objectives of Social Studies**

Adaralegbe (1982) also asserts that Social Studies is a problem-solving approach discipline through which man studies and learn about problems of survival in his environment. Its is inter-disciplinary study of a topic, a problem, an issue, a concern or an inspiration. Social Studies as a course of study stress the concept of equality of man and the philosophy of one nation. It is oriented towards inculcating the following aims and objectives of the Nigeria society as quoted by Okojie (2005):

- To educate students to become useful citizens of the country and understands their environment.
- To make them understand the interaction of man with the environment.
- To help them appreciate the achievement and roles of the society.
- To help them realize the need for interdependence with various groups of the society and the world at large.
- To inculcate in students the value, ideas, knowledge and skills in order to enable them to function properly and play their roles as members of the society.

The above objectives makes the learners to be aware of the problems of their societies and of the world in general and to appreciate the inter-dependence between people, as well as create an understanding and awareness of the evolving social and physical environment, its natural, manmade, cultural and spiritual resources together with the rational use and conservation of these resources for development.

These social problems or social vices like, Examination malpractice , cultism, sexual harassment, corruption, drug abuse, etc. are brought to light in the teaching of social studies to help child to think of how to deal with such problems so as to promote national and societal progress.

It is expected that, when these objectives of are achieved , attainment of national objectives of education in Nigeria could be achieved. According to the (National Policy on Education, 2004) the national objectives of education are:

- The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
- The inculcation of right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigeria society.
- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around, and
- The acquisition of appropriate skills and the devolvement of mental, physical and social abilities and competence as equipments for the individuals to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

### **Social Problems**

So many social problems have become the order of the day. These problems are common among the male and females respectively. Social problems include are immoral activities which are likely to become involved in any profitable venture or activities, like corruption, examination malpractices, cultism, drug abuse, prostitution, gambling , pornography, drugs Etc.

Social problems could be referred to as ill attitude or misbehavior of people concerning their fellow beings, and the society at large (Shamija, 2011). The Nigerian society which is supposed to be a society where members can live in peace, free from social harassment is unfortunately bedeviled with a lot of social problems. This paper however restricts its discussion on some social ills that seems common in our societies thus: Corruption, Cultism, and Drug abuse.

### **Corruption**

According to Shinhima & Apenda (2009), corruption refers to immoral thoughts, behaviour, actions, practices and relationships. In this case a corrupt person is an immoral person, a corrupt action is an immoral action and a corrupt practice is an immoral practice etc. Although there are safe guards against corruption in Nigeria, there are not maintained. There is a constitution and other rules and regulations on matters of accountability, public finance and property. The acronym is that bribery for instance has been given a baptismal name. It is either called a gift, ten percent, or Public Relation (PR). As a result, public funds can be transferred to private pockets as gifts, PR, Ten percent or even national cake. In this situation, one who is opportune to hold a public office is expected to defraud the state in the name of taking his national cake. Failure to do so is counted as weakness on the part of the person. He/ She is not “smart”, “clever”, or “fast”. All these words explain the level of corruption in Nigeria. Nigerians have thus made corruption legal and often push those holding public offices to corruption with these behaviour or language.

Corruption therefore, is a social phenomenon which manifests in various human actions such as deceit, wickedness, selfishness, embezzlement of public fund or property, which could be describe as primitive accumulation of wealth, moral degradation, bribery, insatiability, covetousness etc. Obviously, this problem of corruption which has built up over the years will take some time to correct, assuming we want to do it peacefully through the teachings of social studies education.

### **Cultism**

Cultism according to Advanced Learner’s Dictionary is a small group of people who have extreme religious beliefs and who is not part of any established religion; or a system of religious beliefs and practices. A cult can be said to emanate from great and excessive admiration or belief in a person or idea. This could be manifested in rituals, praise songs, chants and worship. It is an unquestionable practice that may be difficult to dislodge even with superior argument .it could therefore be define as a set of practices, belief system or idea whose essence is known only to the inner members and excessively admired and defended even to the point of laying down one’s life .it is this doggedness and strong conviction demonstrated by members that reinforce the importance of and awe for the group especially among non-members.it is capable of ruining the entire educational system ,which destroys life and truncate others educational pursuit

### **Drug abuse**

Drug abuse is a serious public health problem that affects almost every community and family in some way. Abused drugs include: cocaine, heroin, marijuana or ganja, etc. drug abuse also plays a role in many major social problems, such as drugged driving, violence, stress and child abuse. Drug abuse can lead to homelessness, crime, and missed work or problems with keeping a job it harms unborn babies and destroy families (Drugs Abuse Medicine Plus, 2013).

Drug abuse refers to habitual taking of addictive or illegal drugs. Drug abuse leads to various criminal and deviant behaviour amongst students. It leads to violence, wanton destruction of life and property. Any person operating under the influence of drug is not in his normal sense and so can do the determinant of him and the society. The dangers of drug abuse are stated below:

- An individual is vulnerable to accident under the influence of drugs
- Some of these drugs may depress breathing
- It can lead to unconsciousness or even death
- It can bring confusion and frightening hallucinations
- It can cause unbalance emotion or more serious mental disorder
- An addict will find it difficult to contribute to society.

### **Causes of social ills**

The following are some of the causes of social ills in Nigeria:

Unemployment: unemployment may lead to social ills of different kinds. Some of the unemployed may become criminals or armed robbers, others may become socially maladjusted and seek solace in the drugs and hence become drug addicts; some may develop antisocial traits (Online, causes of social ills, 2013).

No parental control on children: sometimes parents don't give full attention to their children as today many parents expect their children to be good enough to take care of themselves even at their younger age, and some of these children go about looking for corrupt means in order to take care of themselves. Also nowadays, some parents are going out early in the morning to work or business and come back home at midnight. They do not have sufficient time with the children, so who will teach them to be good girls and boys? Who will teach them what are good and bad actions of what the effects are if they are doing the bad things? The answer is no body!

Government is not encouraging the young ones to go to school or have better education. The fees charged in schools are usually too high. This makes low income parents unable to pay the bills and consequently, don't have the means to send their children to school. This sometimes makes the parents not have the thought of maintaining children in school, and rather encourage or leave their children in prostitution, selling and smoking Indian hemp and other hard drugs, cheating /stealing, thurgery, etc. (Indyar, 2012).

Another problem is that extreme poverty has been around for many decades now. People cannot fulfill their basic needs, and there is no way they can get the necessary resources for life without help from government, and government does not care about this. Most still, some live in slums under very poor condition.

### **The Role of Social Studies in curbing social ills in Nigeria**

Social Ills are the bane of any action. Its malady cuts across every religions denominations and political system and it affects both young and old, man and woman alike. It is the cancer that contaminates all strata of the socio-political and economic structure of any society and its malignant nature is difficult to treat.

Social Studies as discipline is geared towards ensuring good citizenship in Nigeria. The subject is aimed at the production of functional and effective citizens and this is equated to citizenship education. Social Studies as a discipline affords the learner the opportunity to know about the positive aspects of our national life like social economic and political aspects, factors in promoting unity, corruption, leadership problems, human rights in Nigeria, rights and obligations of people, social ills and other irresponsible behaviors.

Social Studies through citizenship education can help greatly to eradicate these different vices or social ills in our society. As opine by Shamija (2008), social studies as a discipline, if properly programmed and effectively taught can help to solve problems that are facing developing countries like Nigeria where the norms are fast losing their grips and there are no effective substitution to replace them.

As submitted by Okam (1999), through the teaching of citizenship education, a good citizen emerges who is expected to exhibit certain tenets or characteristics which include the following: an appreciation of the nature and law of social life, a display of intelligent and genuine loyalty to high human ideals, a possession of a sense of responsibility of the individuals as a member of social groups, a display of loyalty and a sense of obligation to one's city, state, nation and to the human race, a possession of the intelligence and the will to participate effectively in the promotion of social wellbeing.

Following this background, it has become a norm to visualize the good citizen as possessing the following desirable attributes namely, looking at things with a democratic slant, believing in decency and fair play, fore- bearing and respect for others, commitment to an acquisition of the custom, traditions and nationalistic ideals of one's country, a belief in the idea of progressive improvement of society, a desire to promote the general welfare and be pledged to raise and safeguard standards of living for all, a display of shared responsibility for the less fortunate, a cherishing of a sense of respect and tolerance for others, a cultivation of social attitudes and values such as cooperation participation, honesty and independence, integrity, open mindedness, trustworthiness, diligence and obedience and acquisition of disposition favorable to social, cultural, physical and economic development. Social Studies place much value on the affective domain in its attempt to promote good citizenship education in a country. Affective domain deals with the evaluation of the attitudes and values that are developed or behavioral changes that are noticeable in the pupils after as course of study. This domain evaluates changes such as respect for elders and other constituted authority such as parents and those in position of governance. Social Studies also emphasized the development of psychomotor domain, that is, the development of skills both in theory and practical, skills that are emphasized include skills such as sifting information, interpretation, identification, recognition, asking and answering questions as well as social skills such as cooperation and tolerance (Shamija & Garba, 2008).

## Suggestions

The following suggestions are proffered:

- Guidance and counseling :there is need for every home, school and church to have a functional in house counselor who will be available to counsel and individuals especially youths on educational matters and on their general way of life:
- The governments should collaborate with the church to bring the needed development such as social infrastructure, preaching and teachings and dissemination of positive information and create public enlightenment through mass media.
- Government should from time to time and as a matter of necessity enlighten should pupil /students about the danger of engaging on social ills, also stakeholders as well as parents should not be left out in the enlightenment.
- Government should introduce drug education as part of curriculum for all secondary schools in the country.
- To mold behaviors of the citizens into habit patterns against social ills, there should be equal participation by all Nigerians. This should be carried out at schools, work places, churches, mosques, clubs, unions and motor parks, etc.
- Government should create more job opportunities to engage the youth and steer them away from social ills.
- Government and proprietors of private schools should constitute examination ethics committee to monitor and curb examination malpractice in all secondary schools and higher institutions.
- It is necessary to ensure that the law enforcement agencies and the bureaucrats co-operate with the public to track down those who persist in corrupt practices.

## Conclusion

Social Studies as a subject of study is the only way for discipline and better society, specifically in curbing social ills in a developing country like Nigeria. An individual's exposed to Social Studies content is given a positive orientation which ultimately prepares him or her to function effectively in the society. Hence, Social Studies is a necessary or veritable tools for fighting social ills in Nigeria. Nigerian youths should also be educated in their environment for the promotion of an understanding of the social problems in their locality and find solution to them. To this, the local community should be the laboratory of the Social Studies teachers, especially in the rural areas as a way of generating impulses needed to spur interest in community development to eradicate social ills.

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