



# **The Relevance of Social Studies in Educational Innovation and Improvisation in A Recessed Economy**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The paper appraised the relevance of Social Studies in educational innovation and improvisation in a recessed economy. The paper presupposes that Social Studies Education has the capability to provide the framework for educational innovation and improvisation in a recessed economy. The paper argued that despite the impact of the discipline in the Nigerian educational system, the utilization and application of its idea has not been related to the recessed economy; whereas Social Studies is the type of education relevant in solving the problem of a recessed economy in Nigeria. The objective of the review was to highlight the role of Social Studies Education to economic growth and development as the right type of education able to bring about innovation and improvisation in a recessed economy. The study employed content analysis in its investigation using secondary data related to the subject-matter. The analysis of data indicates that Social Studies Education is a response to social change of which a recessed economy was an issue of grave concern. It was discovered that Social Studies teaches the need to improvise where there is the experience of insufficiency, inadequacy and lack in society. Findings from the study also indicate that Social Studies education contributes to developing good quality value system in society. Exposure to Social Studies education introduces the individual to the desirable values which are cherished in society. The paper concluded that unless people are willing to apply values and adapt them in context, there will be a continuum in poor governance, corruption and outright neglect of constitutional prohibitions. Hence, it was recommended that economic planning and subsequent implementation should be enhanced by government. This will encourage quick recovery from a recessed economy and avoid future re-occurrence.

**Keywords:** Social Studies, Education, Quality Education, Improvisation, Recessed Economy

## **INTRODUCTION**

Social Studies Education has the capability to provide the framework for educational innovation and improvisation in a recessed economy. This is because Social Studies Education is an integrative subject with emphasis on human and the influence these humans bear on their environment. The introduction of Social Studies into the Nigeria educational system aligned with the national goal and its philosophy of education. Olatunji (2015) asserts that the Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on the belief that education is an instrument for national development and social change among others. This objective have been expounded in the Social Studies curriculum at all level of education in Nigeria since 1963 when the subject was first experienced at the Ayetoro High School. Thus, its role cannot be in doubt considering its relevance in the educational and societal engineering.

Despite the impact of the discipline in the Nigerian educational system, its utilization and application of its ideal for the investigation of social issues such as the issue of the recent recession facing the Nigerian economy has not been considered. It appears that there is reduced awareness about Social Studies among

stakeholders responsible for finding solution to the failing economy. The lack of awareness of the potentials of Social Studies Education among political office holders compounding how to solve the problem brought to the Nigeria society by the recession of the nation's economy. Thus, the main objective of this paper among others is to explain how Social Studies Education is a veritable tool for innovation and improvisation in a recessed economy in Nigeria. Against this background, the paper examines the relevance of Social Studies Education by showing how it could be used by stakeholders in the education industry as well as political office holders in order to solve the recessed economy in Nigeria.

### **Education and Recessed Economy**

Education generally is accepted as the main stable tool for driving a nation's economy. This view was upheld in the study by Olalekan (2015) that "in classical times, societies that emerged with functional educational system were those with definite and clearly expressed philosophy of education". The implication of the above statement seems to blame the Nigeria failing economy on the type of education in the country. This could not be far from truism because most of the values on which the unstated philosophy of education is based are vague as well as many goals of education that are stated in the national policy document which would have served the purpose of nurturing the nation's philosophy of education do not communicate much. Thus, the philosophy could not provide the needed direction for national economic engineering.

The purpose of education in its foremost goal is to provide capacity to its citizens so that the knowledge, training and required skills for meaningful contribution in the development of human and material resources can be achieved. This view is not different from the position held by Nasiru (2012), who observed that "the strategic position of education in nation building cannot be over emphasized". According to him "no nation aspiring to progress will take for granted the educational sector of her country". This means that education has not meaningfully prepared its citizen for advancement. This is why many concerned stakeholders in the Nigeria project have taken a critical position on the way and manner the country's education sector is been run over the years.

Concerned with the state of education in Nigeria, scholarly analysis have been undertaken at different times by Ukadike (2010), Nasiru (2012), Adamolekun (2013) and so on in the field of education practice and research. Some of these views including empirical review is presented in the following section. The study by Orji and Job (2013) attempted to explain the role of education in national development from the Nigerian experience. They found that much is not being derived from the sector due to neglect on the part of government, corruption, policy discontinuity, inter alia; whereas a nation develops in relation to its achievement in education. Many developed economy focused on education as an instrument of launching nations into the world of science and technology. The consequence is shown in human advancement in terms of living conditions and development of the environment. The authors believed that "education in the life of a nation is the livewire of its industries and also the foundation of moral regeneration and revival of its people". The Nigerian education sector is yet to achieve this height.

Adamu (1994) was concerned with the development of educational innovations in Nigeria as change strategies around which education is interpreted as a powerful agent of social transformation. This study was founded on the idea that, changing economic, social and political situation in both developed and developing countries have combined to create needs for constant innovations and reforms in education. Every condition that should prompt educational reforms is present in Nigeria today, including the case of economic recession, unemployment of young graduate, among other socio-economic and political issues.

Ohanyido (2012) investigated the pivotal role of education in Africa's development. He argued that development is not possible with education. Citing the obvious fact that "without doubt the capacity to think, innovate, transmit and utilize new knowledge is central to development". This concept seem to be absent in Nigeria society. According to him, it is only nations with highly skilled and educated labour force that boast of development. This is because development is tied to knowledge based economy which only education is capable of providing. The description in the above study suggests that this is lacking in the Nigerian context. While education is pivotal for development, its gain has not being used to engineer

the suitable development in Nigeria or else the recessed economy would not have been experienced in the first instance.

Burchi (2006) linked education to socio-economic development. He believed that education is both intrinsically and instrumentally for socio-economic advancement in any country. In his opinion, education is considered as a means to ensure economic growth. According to him “education can play an instrumental role in two different ways”. These include “through economic production and through social change”. His argument is that basic education can improve the capacity of individuals to live a decent life and to escape from recession in times of economic downturn; his postulation points to the fact that when people are educated, they are able to create wealth for themselves and be able to support the economy with their creative initiatives and help society. This will raise the question that “What is the state of education in Nigeria? What types of education do Nigerians received? Has education the answer to the recessed economy in Nigeria? The following section has attempted to provide a concise answer.

### **State of Education in Nigeria**

Given the fact that most of the Nigerian educational systems were inherited from her colonial masters, much change has not been witnessed as per the state of education in modern Nigeria. This observation was better stressed in the study by Ochulor (2005). He found that the state of education in Nigeria has remained “an instrument for enhancing the nation’s objective”. This condition of education has not satisfied the aspiration of the Nigerian society. Ochulor (2005) pointed out that, “education should lay emphasis on the possibility of using science (knowledge) to help solve social problems”. Every critical mind would agree that education in Nigeria is yet to attain that height where individual haven acquired education are capable of solving their social problem such as young graduate being able to create job by themselves due to the experience received in education.

Although, Nigeria has a sound philosophical framework for a better education sector whose objective ought to have shaped the country if it has been well managed and implemented. For example, the Nigeria’s philosophy of education believes that education fosters the worth and development of the individual for each individual’s sake and for general development of the society; the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; the acquisition of appropriate skills and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society. When compared the state of education to the above noble idea for using education for mobilization of society, observation will tell that we have not mean well in the actualization of the stated objectives. Whereas, it was fundamentally enshrined in the document that “education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important instrument of change; any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by education”. but the reality suggests that the state of the education sector is much to be desired.

The Guardian Newspaper, Lagos (2017) in its editorial targeted the state of Nigeria’s education as poor. The editorial observed that “education is the soul of a nation, the key to its secured future but it is a well known fact that Nigeria is deteriorating”. In addition, it describes the state of the country’s education as ugly. According to it, “this ugly state of the country’s education has been attributed over time to a number of factors including underfunding, low quality teaching personnel, poor infrastructure, poverty of curriculum and absent of dedicated practitioners”. In another development, the paper revealed that there is rot in the education sector. It stated that “from primary through secondary to the tertiary level, the rot is mind-boggling. It is a decline which must be arrested if Nigeria’s future would not be jeopardized”. The above observation are the reality of the state of the Nigeria education system.

Dike (2002) discussed the state of education and its effect on the polity. He was prompted into his discussion on the theory that “the survival of Nigeria as a viable society will depend on the health of her educational institutions and how well the professors and support staff are treated”. He portrays the state of education in Nigeria as a public health issue. He sued for the need for Nigerian leaders to pay close attention to the needs of the educational sector and treat it as a public health. His reason was that “the socio-political and economic development of a nation and (or her health) is in many ways determined by the quality and level of educational attainment of the population”. His observation was informed by the

fact that the education sector has faced neglect and it is facing continued neglect. Consequently, the desired contribution of the sector towards economic growth and national development has not been achieved. Dike stressed the fact that “Nigeria has toiled with some educational programme which has only served as conduit to transfer money to the corrupt political leaders and their cronies”. This attitude described above affects a number of vital components of the sector, including labour unrest prompted by non-payment of salaries among other factors. Consequently, the state of a nation’s education will also determine the type of education it provides.

### **Quality of Education in Nigeria**

Good quality education constitutes the basis for any nation’s education programme. It is good quality education the Nigeria society has long been denied and has been offered substandard education by public school management. The United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF) (2017) outlined five elements that defined quality education. These are:

- The learner’s outside experience
- Learning environment
- Content of education
- Learning processes and
- Education outcomes

The document shows that learners must be healthy, well-nourished and supported by their families and communities. The learning environment should be safe, healthy and stimulating. Appropriate education content is relevant to the learner and presented in well-managed classroom. Learning outcomes should meet and promote participation in society.

Grima (2008) on her view asserts that, “quality determines how much and how well children learn and the extent to which their education translates into a range of personal, social and developmental benefits”. The implication of Grima (2008) observation is that, quality education is the function of policy and programme implemented by government for the good of society. In the same thinking, Pigozzi (2006) indicates that “a conventional definition of quality includes literacy, numeracy and life skills and is directly linked to such critical components as teachers, content, methodologies, curriculum, examination systems, policy, planning and management and administration. This conceptual understanding underscores the need to offer the Nigerian citizen quality education by improving conditions such as identified in the study by Pigozzi and others.

According to Pigozzi (2006) “there is a demand however for education to reflect upon its relevance to the modern world”. He noted that “while in the past much of the emphasis in education is related to cognitive understanding and development, now there is a need to also address the social and other dimensions of learning”. In addition, he revealed that “education is expected to make a contribution to addressing sustainable human development, peace and security, universal values, informed decision-making and the quality of life and individual, family, societal and global level”. The characteristics identified in Pigozzi (2006) are significantly needed in the school system as the type of education the Nigeria child should be offered and experienced. Adamolekun (2013) agreed with the fact that “education has social, economic, political and security benefits for an individual, for a society and for a country”. That “education is almost everywhere considered as the key to economic prosperity and a vital instrument for combating disease, tackling poverty and supporting sustainable development”. Therefore, it will be important that education should prepare individuals and make them suitable for their environment. The relevant type of education that will do this is quality education and not less.

### **The Relevance of Social Studies Education**

Many school programmes are planned with the objectives its intended to achieve. Among the committee of disciplines, Social Studies Education seems to address social issues headlong more than any other subject in the school system. The definition of Social Studies by educators and scholars reveals its

relevance in solving socio-political and economic problem in any environment. Zamillo (2013) defines the term as follows:

Social Studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school programme, Social Studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion and sociology as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics and natural sciences

The features which characterize the Social Studies Education make it a programme with relevance to society issues. This is because it is laden with nearly all type of knowledge desirable that can educate, train and equip an individual to become a good and reliable citizen. This idea is rooted in what is found in the objective of the subject matter. The primary purpose of Social Studies according to Zamillo is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. What this means is that Social Studies education is able to prepare people for their role and function in society. This objective where individual are prepared seems peculiar with Social Studies education. Berson, Cruz, Duplass and Johnson (2002) stated that “Social Studies would have as its main goal the cultivation of good citizens”, indicating the uniqueness of the programme in any given society.

The relevance of the discipline is founded on the conceptual framework that prepare students to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice and the capacity to make sense of their world, to think about how things got to be the way they are and to be active and informed citizens committed to democratic principles and ideals. The concept presented in Social Studies shows that the objective of the education in Social Studies deals directly with enhancing performance of individual charged with the responsibility of governance, leadership, administration and management of human and material resources in a large scale. In other words, all categories of individuals in society would need the knowledge and ideal postulated in Social Studies to be able to effectively and efficiently function in any sectors of the economy.

Furthermore, the National Council for the Social Studies United States (1992) defines Social Studies as “the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence”. This definition revealed another relevance of Social Studies education and that is civic competence. The definition spelt out the aim of the course. The aim of Social Studies is the promotion of civic competence. This entails the knowledge, intellectual processes and democratic dispositions required of students to be active and engaged participants in public life. The link between Social Studies education and public life explains the importance of the subject matter. Hence, its framework is suitable for the investigation and monitoring of public service including a recessed economy. Although civic competence is not the only responsibility of Social Studies but it is more central to Social Studies than any other subject area in the schools. Thus, its concept is applicable to all facet of life in the society particularly economic growth, socio-economic development, national integration, skill acquisition, social skill development, political engineering and much more aspects of the society.

### **Social Studies Education: A Response to Social Change**

Social Studies education has become the type of education that responds to social change via its practical teachings in the school system. it provides the necessary explanation to what people do and the reasons for their actions. As a result, its model fits into innovation and improvisation in whatever condition affecting the social, economic, political, religious and physical environment of a society. Knowledge in Social Studies provides the understanding of the social trend and be able to challenge, confront, investigate and recommends appropriate measures leading to solving the identified problem. This is because Social Studies has a high premium on human experience, it tackles the day-to-day experience arising from the frontiers of families, schools, business, polity, sport, entertainment and so on.

Moffitt (2017) asserts that Social Studies education is able to respond to social change because it interprets the actions, attitude and the behaviour that individual puts whenever there is change in the

society. She described social change as “the transformation of culture and social institutions over time”. The examples of social change in Nigeria are many but one of which is the recessed economy from the start of the Buhari’s administration where many Nigerian have lost their purchasing power.

Learning in Social Studies bring about innovation. Social Studies is an innovative course of study. Learners are introduced to ideas that are aimed at enhancing their creative and critical thinking processes. The outcome of Social Studies experience is that the individual will be capable of effective implementation of independent idea that could better society. The correlate between Social Studies and innovation is contained in the study by Mezieobi and Onyeanusu (2011) citing Chikwelu (2001). The held that “Social Studies education serves as a corrective (innovative) measure in shaping attitudes and conditions for national development”. They argued that Social Studies education could innovate because its objectives tend towards helping learners with ideas for their benefit and the benefit of others. Hence, they believed that “Social Studies education inculcates into the learners the abilities and skills that will make them become effective and functional members of the society”. The learners are assisted to “master their environment, explore and harness the available resources in their environment for solving societal needs and bettering the lives of the people”. This function of Social Studies education is linked directly with society. Learners gain the idea in how to change the ills of their community, engage in community engineering among others.

What is learnt in Social Studies education aligned with the definition cited in the study by Skillicorn (2016) on innovation. According to him, innovation is “the application of ideas that are novel and useful”. The implication of this definition for Social Studies is that its contents are idea laden. Also, Social Studies is concerned with what happens both at the immediate times and in the future and the role of individuals for facing challenges created by social change and how to solve the impending problems confronting man in the form of climate change, economic recession, road crashes, crime, fraud, insecurity among other. The notion is well stated in the objective of Social Studies. These are:

- Acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community
- The acquisition, development and inculcation of proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and society
- The development of the individual’s capacities to understand and appreciate their environment
- The acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environment.

Chikwelu (2001) indicates that “these objectives are derived from the national goals of education and thus reflect the societal needs” including the innovation efforts of the society by individual with the relevant idea, skills, knowledge, competence, orientation, attitudes and value orientation. Similarly, innovation is also sequel to the training received in Social Studies in components such as decision-making skill, critical thinking, problem-solving and rational social actions which are paramount for the progress and development of both the individual and the society at large. The application of these elements in any organization, government agencies and establishment are result oriented and goal achieving dynamics. Ukadike (2010) agreed with the contribution of Social Studies to the cause of social innovation. According to his observation, he found that “the inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hardwork, fairness and justice at work are the contributions of Social Studies education. Consequently, these ingredients are the hub of innovation in society. Where they are lacking or absent, advancement and development is distorted and stalled. The impact of these values could result in the improvisation of what is lacking in society.

### **Social Studies and Improvisation**

Social Studies teaches the need to improvise where there is the experience of insufficiency, inadequacy and lack of already made goods such as imported materials or when goods get out of the reach of the common man – the majority poor. The idea derived from the study in Social Studies education presupposes that after being exposed to this type of education, it is expected that the learner would gain the ability to cope, adjust and remediate any shortage in food supply; be able to handle unwarranted

situation in his or her environment; he is not caught napping in the presence of depression or economic recession. Social Studies education prepares the individual to face the challenge imposed on him from the environment. His adaptation to these challenges is rapid because he or she has acquired the skill of improvisation that enables him to tackle economic crisis like recession presently being experienced in Nigeria.

Often, classroom teachers have been trained in the art of instructional resources during the years of their teacher training. This knowledge assists them to transfer the need of improvisation to learners during teaching and learning in classroom situations. The study by Abdu-Raheem and Oluwagbohunmi (2015) found that “Social Studies is a subject that assists learners to become more competent for living in the modern world”. Their observation arose from their conviction that exposure to Social Studies education equips the individual with the ability to improvise in time of recessed economy. This is because improvisation introduces the individual to real life situation. Thus, improvisation of instructional materials in classroom laid the background to do so when the need arises in the larger society. Therefore, it is not difficult with those who had the technique of improvisation to improvise during a recessed economy.

### **Social Studies Education and Recessed Economy**

The knowledge of Social Studies Education is suitable for tackling a recessed economy. Many reasons have been adduced for holding to this opinion. By definition, McKinney (2017) stated that “economic recession is a period of general economic decline and is typically accompanied by a drop in the stock market, an increase in unemployment and a decline in the housing market”. According to Amadeo (2017) “a recession is when the economy declines significantly”. This implies that there is a drop in real gross domestic product (GDP), income, employment, manufacturing and retail sales. Osalor (2016) affirms, citing the finance minister, Kemi Adeosun that “Nigeria’s economic situation is in its worst possible time”. He backed-up this observation with statistical analysis showing that “the inflation rate shrank at 17.1%. The GDP had contracted by 2.06%, the economy by 0.36%”. In addition, the case of the recessed economy was also reported by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). According to the NBS report, the recession affected the Nigeria’s economy in the areas of its gross domestic product, inflation, employment and unemployment, capital importation and other key fundamentals.

Noko (2016) identified the causes of the economic recession in Nigeria to consist of five elements. According to him, they include:

- High inflation – a general rise in price of goods and services, leading to low purchasing power
- Accumulation of debt servicing especially foreign debts
- High interest rate – discouraging investors
- Fall in aggregate demand – fall in wages, income
- Mass unemployment and general loss of confidence on the government due to economic indices.

These five elements are peculiar to global recession which was experienced in the years of 1981, 1991, 2004, 2008-2009; although, the above elements are reflected in the Nigerian recessed economy. The Nigeria recession is attributed to what Noko described as poor economic planning. He found that “poor economic planning is a major cause of Nigeria current recession. The manifestation of this problem is shown in society as people experience high inflation rate, high interest rate, high taxation, policy conflict among others.

Many measures have been suggested that could end economic recession in Nigeria. These are:

- Reduction in tax rate
- Effective spending
- Enhance access to credit
- Increase expenditure on skill
- Increase agricultural produce and export
- Increase manufacturing produce and export

Of the measures listed that could end economic recession, the role of Social Studies Education was not mentioned despite its ability to resolve the problem caused by a recessed economy. Thus, the role of Social Studies Education in this regard is briefly stated.

### **Social Studies Teaches Values**

Operators of the Nigerian economy need re-orientation in our value system. Raji (2016) observes in the following that:

Every society is identified with peculiar characteristics of its people such as the beliefs and values which invariably forms their common identity. The kind of value adopted by a nation greatly determines the level of its development. Any nation that could indeed be great must be established upon enduring national values that binds every individual in the corporate entity. What determines how successful one would turn out in life is largely the values we subscribe to.

The above observation indicates that lack of positive value system is central to the cause of the recessed economy in Nigeria. This is because Raji underscores the fact that people's value orientation determines their actions. Hence, he observes that corruption reigns supreme in Nigeria because our value are faulty; whereas Social Studies education contributes to developing good quality value in society. Exposure to Social Studies education introduces the individual to the desirable values which are cherished in society. Unless people are willing to apply values and adapt them in context, there will be a continuum in poor governance, corruption and outright neglect of constitutional prohibitions.

Consequently, recovering from a recessed economy is possible when operators of the economy are in tune with the following values such as sincerity, faithfulness, obedience to what one conceives to be the highest, gratitude, honesty, benevolence, generosity, cheerfulness, selflessness, freedom from egoism, equanimity in joy and suffering, in honour and dishonor, success and failure, pursuit of the deepest and the highest of the absolute and ultimate and the progressive expression of this pursuit in thought, feeling and action. Value education is the contribution of Social Studies to better society.

Ikwumelu, Basse and Oyibe (2015) point out that value education as an aspect of what is taught in Social Studies is planned with the aim of developing a critical value perspective in our pupils that will enable them to employ modern skills for the betterment of mankind while helping them renew their commitment to fundamental traditional values. In addition, they found that "an important aspect of value education programmes in all countries relates to the development of the spirit of national identity and patriotism". They believe that value-based education can show which morals are "bad" morals and which are "good". That the change in behaviour comes from wrestling with questions about right and wrong. Thus, misguided values have its implication in society, particularly for development. Thus, a recessed economy is a consequence of misplaced value for equity, fairness and justice. According to Njoku (2015), "when national life is taken over by social sin, the citizens pursue wealth without knowledge, without character, pleasure without conscience, commerce without morality, worship without sacrifice, science without humanity and politics without principles". His observation correlates the experience of a recessed economy because value for prudence and accountability has been neglected by the powers that be.

Therefore, re-orientation of value system would promote national image, respect for human life and corporate values. The youth would imbibe the culture of hard work and productivity, wealth creation, employment generation, entrepreneurship, intangible wealth and competition. This values enables the individual to respect constituted authorities, shorn practices that defame family name and keep the dignity of self and pride. Thus, Njoku believes that the crisis of value system in Nigeria suggests that the growth and progress of the society is being retarded in many aspects, including recessed economy.

### **CONCLUSION**

Nigeria recessed economy is a reality which requires solution. Although many measures for solving the problem have been advocated, it is obvious that a lasting solution could be achieved through application of education. This is because educations have been used as a major driver of any economy globally.

Hence, Nigeria has also felt the need to use education to strengthen its institution. However, the right type of education that deals with social change is conversed because of the attitudinal disposition of many people who are responsible for governance. It is against this background Social Studies education which is the right type of education the deals with social issue was introduced as a corrective measure for a recessed economy. Hence, the paper concludes that Social Studies education is relevant for solving the recession facing the economy in Nigeria. This is because Social Studies teach value orientation that is the need of the present circumstances.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommends among others that:

- Social Studies Education should be made a compulsory subject to be taught at all level of schooling in Nigeria. This is to enable individuals to be inculcated with the relevant social skill for societal engineering.
- Nigeria should re-orient its value system of patriotism which negates corrupt practices in public domain and office. This re-orientation will make corruption unattractive to public office holders, thereby checkmating the re-occurrence of economic crisis of this magnitude.
- Economic planning and subsequent implementation should be enhanced by government. This will encourage quick recovery from a recessed economy and avoid future re-occurrence.

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