

Social Studies and Human Capacity Building for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Ogheneakoke Edore Clifford (Ph.D), Benike Joseph
Department Of Social Science Education, Delta State University, Abraka

Abstract

The key to success of every organization, national economy and sustainability of a nation depends largely on the quality of human resources that are available to such organization or nation. The necessity for human capacity building therefore cannot be overstressed. Human capacity building is quite pivotal in empowering sustainable development. It encompasses technical skills, individual abilities, attitude and competence amongst others. The paper examined the concept of human capacity buildings, its dimensions and goals focus. It also discussed the concept of sustainable development and its theme which include: endogeneity, basic needs gratification, structural reform, inclusivity and social capital. The paper pointed out that Social Studies is a veritable tool or vehicle for building human capacity for sustainable development in Nigeria. It recommended among others that Social Studies should be accorded high premium in the education system.

Keywords: Social Studies, Human Capacity Building, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Over the years Social Studies has been regarded as the most potent, veritable tool or vehicle through which human capacity is built. Concurring with the above assertion Constance (2015) held the opinion that citizenship, Social Studies skills, interaction, cultural awareness and interpreting information are the key components of Social Studies. The implication is that Social Studies core focus is the teaching of skills, interpreting information, awareness in one's cultural environment etc. which is summarized as human capacity building. This is supported by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2011) when it said that Social Studies is an integrated study mainly made up of the Social Sciences and Humanities primarily to promote civic competence. The emphasis here is civic competence. Competence comes into play via training or education just as human capacity building.

The European Action Plan (EAP) (2015) pointed out three ways for human capacity building which include education/training; professional development and public awareness. And these cardinal points of human capacity building are roundly captured in the critical objectives of Social Studies: informational learning; skills learning, and attitudes and values learning (Osakwe and Itedjere, 2005). This has further strengthened the belief that Social Studies provides a powerful platform for human capacity building for the general good of the society with the preoccupation of ensuring sustainable development in the society.

In Nigeria, the general outcry is the burning desire, crave for sustainable development. To sustain any form of development in any human society there must be human capacity building and the driver of that capacity building process (in this discourse) is Social Studies. Development is all about a process that includes dynamism and changes which bring about growth and progress in a positive way (Ojo, 2005). However, Kapucu and Demiroz (2013) saw sustainable development as that development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. Therefore, the paper presents herein the picture of how Social Studies can consolidate the process of human capacity building which in turn will guarantee sustainable development for the benefit of the Nigeria society.

Concept of Social Studies

Social Studies as a discipline varies from country to country in terms of definition, application, content and scope. This is predicated upon the objectives the subject is set to achieve in such country. The concept, therefore, defines the content and scope of the subject (Social Studies) in any country it is adopted at all levels of learning (Ezegbe, 2012). Osakwe and Itedjere (2005) while citing Westey (1950) concurred with the foregoing that Social Studies has been in use since 1905 but in the mould of economics, sociology and civics, and history in 1950 which might have caused this apparent variability in application, content and scope of Social Studies from country to country. However, this does not invalidate the age long belief that Social Studies is mainly concerned with the study of people (man), their environment, and the society in which they live, how and where they live, how societal structures are formed and how they govern themselves for the general good of society (Osakwe and Itedjere, 2005; Onyeaghor, 2015).

In Nigeria, Social Studies became consolidated the more when the 6-3-3-4 system which means six years (primary school) three years (junior secondary school) and four years (university education) was introduced into the school curriculum. This is rather strengthened by the planners of the 1982 revised edition of the national policy on education which made an outright provision for Social Studies education. Social Studies

thus became a core subject area in the junior secondary school curriculum tied to the national philosophy of education (N.P.E, 2004). This philosophy is captured by the following:

1. Inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
2. Inculcation of the right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
3. Training of the mind in the understanding of the world around;
4. Acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society (NPE 2004).

The foregoing is summarized and captured in the Social Studies main objectives as:

- (a) Informational learning
- (b) Skills learning
- (c) Attitudes and value learning (Osakwe and Itedjere, 2005)

This assertion is strongly supported by Banks and Clegg (1977) when they stated that Social Studies has in its core objectives the desire to establish strong foundations for virile citizenship goals among young people in the society. Similarly the National Council for Social Studies (2007) cited by Benike (2007) stated the goals of Social Studies to include:

1. Ensuring that the learners understand the social, economic and political environments within the society.
2. Ensuring the development of positive self confidence or concept
3. Ensuring the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of the multiplicity of culture within the society etc. Therefore, it is imperative to note that, after careful examination of Social Studies in line with the above discussion, Social Studies goals are geared towards building human capacity.

Human Capacity Building

Williamson, Rajabifard and Feonery (2003) argued that human capacity building is seen and viewed differently by different people which breeds confusion as there is lack of consensus among scholars. Nonetheless, Yamoah (2014) opined that human capacity building is the same as acquiring education, training and human resources development. Nurfazreen, Mas'rof and Rahman (2013) slightly held similar opinion when they said that human capacity building is all about laying emphasis on aspects of human (individual) and community capacity to increase the standard of living. But Hampel (2009) held the view that human capacity building is a process that translates into increasing the capability in performance of a certain activity which can be skills, knowledge and so on.

The above argument notwithstanding, there seems to be an international consensus regarding the meaning and application of human capacity building. United Nations Environment Programme (2009) said that the international consensus on human capacity building is simply the promotion of sustainable development and the required attention needed to go about it. By implication human capacity building requires sustainability, long lasting for the good of the individual and society. European Action Plan (EAP) on capacity building for ICZM (2015) outlined the following as human capacity building processes or efforts (types):

1. Education/training
2. Professional development
3. Public awareness

It is further noted there is formal capacity building which includes education training and professional development. This echoes the fact that item 1 and 2 above are subsumed into formal capacity building. Whereas, the informational capacity building involves the deliberate creation of structures and networks which pave way for unhindered access to information on vital issues that may not require education and training. This captures the last item (3) aptly; hence it is wise to classify human capacity into formal and informal.

However, for the purpose of clarify, education as a type (effort) of human capacity building simply implies the teaching of fundamental knowledge on a certain disciplinary field. While "training" is the teaching of vocational or practical knowledge that relates to specific useful skills (European Action Plan, 2015). Going by this, it is clear that there is a marked difference between education and training. Accordingly, professional development is the enhancement of personnel working...in related fields by providing them with new skills, knowledge and attitudes in order to effectively perform new tasks.

How does Human Capacity Building Work?

At this point it is important to ask: what is capacity building? In order to lay out a sound discussion the concept of Toolkitsport Development (2015) is adopted here. According to this concept capacity building has two dimensions: expertise and skills must be available and again the expertise must be available in relation to the development objectives to achieve. On this basis the following definitional approaches are apt:

1. It is a process targeted at improving skills of individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and communities for carrying out key functions, solving problems etc

2. It is a process targeted at strengthening the skills of an organization or group of organizations to improve their functioning. Having known this it is now appropriate to look at the points below to determine how human capacity building works. According to Toolkitsport Development (2015) there are three levels that can be used to determine the workability of human capacity building.

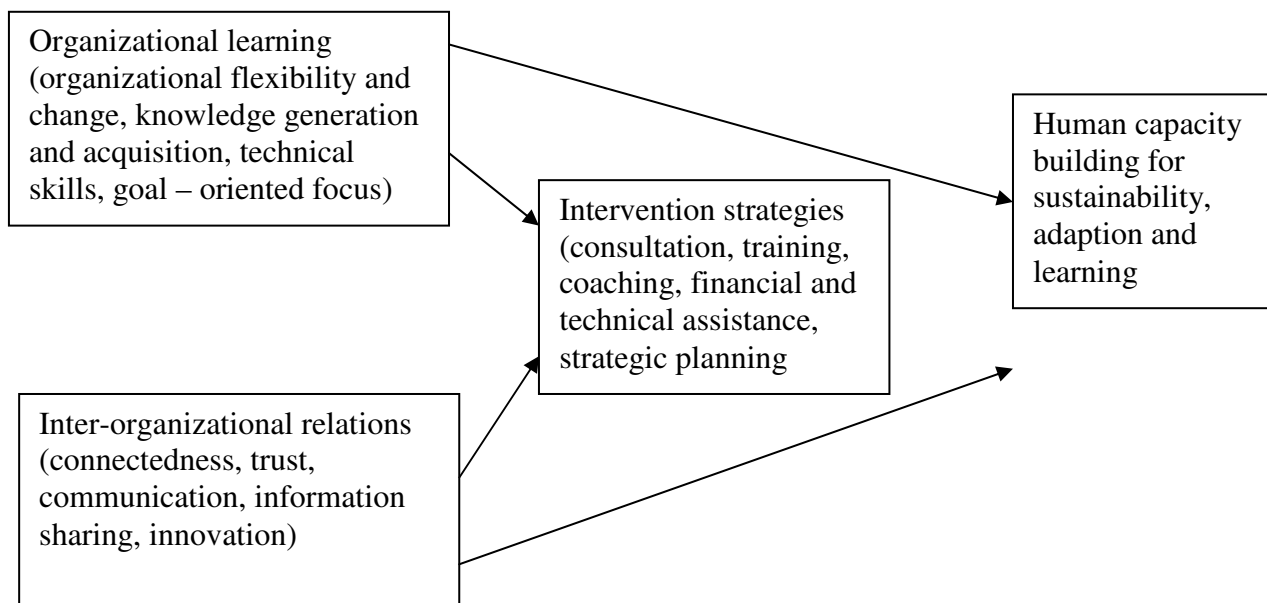
1. Human Resources Development (HRD)
2. Organizational Development (OD)
3. Institutional Development (ID)

Human resources development means keeping on with current trends of the standard and quality of any organization's resources. This requires the putting into practice of knowledge, skills, attitude and motivation in day-to-day work in an organization the outcome of which is for the general, greater benefit for such organization. Development on the other hand implies the capacity to sustainably improving and strengthening an organization's internal capacity in order to achieve set goals. Organizational development focuses on the following:

1. Strategy and policy
2. Learning capacity
3. Structure (formal and informal division and coordination of roles, positions and responsibilities)
4. Systems (internal processes that regulate the functioning of an organization)
5. Staff (development of staff capacity)
6. Culture (values, principles and styles of the organization)
7. Financial management (fund raising etc)
8. Networking (ability to maintain relationships) and
9. Technical competency

Institutional development means the ability to create the conditions necessary for strengthening individual organizations of the society as the case may be. Kapucu and Demiroz (2013) painted the way human capacity building works in a clearer picture via a conceptual map of network capacity.

Conceptual Map of Capacity Building (modified)



Source: Kapucu and Demiroz (2013)

The Concept of Sustainable Development

According to World Bank (2015) sustainable development has so many definitions. But it singled out one as a landmark definition which came into limelight in 1987: “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Nevertheless, these needs may conflict with one another. For instance, clean air to breathe and a car for transportation may form the needs of any individual which may automatically clash or conflict (World Bank, 2015). But Soola (2002) implied that sustainable development is a development that is intragenerationally and intergenerationally situated which does not only generates economic growth but distributes its benefits equitably, that empowers people rather than marginalizing them.

However, Soola (2002) further broke down the theme of sustainable development for the purposes of clarity to include:

1. **Endogeneity:** This means that development must within; each society defining its own values, norms and mores.
2. **Basic Needs Gratification:** This means that development must strive towards addressing local needs and aspirations.
3. **Structural Reform:** This harps on the need to foster a situation of involvement and participation in informal decision making and distribution of development benefits.
4. **Inclusivity:** This refers to the mechanism, processes and networks of interpersonal relations that nurture trust and norms if cooperativeness.
5. **Social Capital:** This involves social activity that quickens poverty reduction, encourages civic involvement and superior level of government etc.

In a nutshell, sustainable development is the totality of all facets of development in any human society that can stand the test of time. Nigeria, on this note is in dire need of sustainable development empowered by human capacity building.

Conclusion

Human capacity building is quite pivotal in empowering sustainable development in our daily engagements. Nigeria is no exception; as a country; sustainable development is top on the priority list if we would want to see and live in an enduring, prosperous society characterized by multiplicity of socio-cultural traits and attitudes as it is in Nigeria.

On the strength of the above Social Studies and human capacity building as elaboratively discussed in the preceding paragraphs become inevitable. Human capacity building nourished by the Social Studies core objectives provides the needed strength to ensure sustainable development in Nigerian society.

Recommendations

The paper recommends the following:

1. For Nigeria to enjoy sustainable development Social Studies should be accorded high premium in the educational system.
2. Social Studies should be taught compulsorily in the senior secondary school to imbue in the students a sense of human capacity building before post secondary education.
3. Sustainable development as a concept should be widely discussed in different academic fora in order to strengthen the understanding of the concept by Nigerians.

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