

SOCIAL STUDIES AND NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECT

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Abstract

Social Studies is presumed to study human being interaction holistically within and with his environment. It was introduced into the Nigerian school system decades ago, with the goal of breaking down regional and ethnic loyalties and fostering national unity and development. Human activities constitute the processes of nation building and leads to national development. This paper examines the concept of nation building and the task of Social Studies education in enhancing national development in Nigeria. This paper also overviews the challenges of nation building and Social Studies in Nigeria. It suggests practical steps to be taken so that through Social Studies the desired national development will be enhanced in Nigeria.

Keyword: Social Studie , Education , National Development .

Introduction

The creation of an enlightened society is a crucial prerequisite to nation-building and national development. The place of social studies education in this regard was glaring in the late '60s and early '70s in Nigeria. Until recently, education in Nigeria was of great concern to the government. The federal government has set forth a national policy on education (1969), which established a national objective, which in turn, serves as the foundation for the programme objectives of social studies education.

Social Studies curriculum shows that it is pathway to nation-building enterprise because of the goodies it provides in knowledge, skills and behaviour training. The definition of Social Studies curriculum in the United State says it is the integrated study to promote civic competence; to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasonable decision for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world (U.S.A National Council for Social Studies 2002). Social Studies Education inculcates and utilizes the necessary attitudes, values and skills to fit the individual into the society. This act of learning and study enables the learners to develop their knowledge

and understanding of the diverse and dynamic nature of the society, how interaction occurs in cultures, societies and environments. Social Studies education is practical and utilitarian towards making definite impact on a society and by extension makes effort at bringing society together under one big umbrella. This paper therefore identifies various challenges facing Social Studies and suggests solutions toward eradicating it in order to help bring up Sustainable development in Nigeria.

The Concept of Nation- Building

Nation building is a normative and universal concept that means different things to different people. It assumes that someone is intentionally evolving ideas and concept. Nation building refers to a concerted effort to bring people or peoples together for the purpose of achieving common objectives. It involves the psychological reconstruction of individuals, a process of infusing into the people of new independent territories who differ widely in languages, religion and values, with a new sense of common belonging and shared identity (Adekaye ;1991).

Amustutz (1990) wants us to believe that nation building is the name given to the group of processes involve in the growth and

development of the nation. Nation building could be described as an attempt to promote the survival of a nation and build very strong and dynamic nation. It is also an attempt to harness all the potentials of the nation (human and natural resources) for the benefit of the citizens of a nation. Nation building involves the contributions of individuals, groups and organizations in the realm of politics, economics, and religion, social and cultural. Hence, nation building and development should be attended to democratically (Dewey, 2007). Nation building and development is evolutionary rather than revolutionary. It takes a long time and social political process that cannot be jump-started from outside. It comprises elements of genuine self rule creating effective governing institution, cultural match and the need for a strategic orientation which involves long term planning.

According to Taylor- Kamara, (2010) nation building is the implementation of processes that are geared toward development and conceived as an aspect of growth and change that is desirable, broadly predicted, planned administered and influenced by government action. It is a multidimensional process that involves the re-organization and re-orientation of the entire political, economic and social system. Development should lead to improvement in incomes and outputs. It should lead to radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structure, popular attitudes, customs, beliefs and eradication of absolute poverty.

The Task of Nation- Building, National Development and Social Studies

Social Studies Education as a mega force is the field of learning and study which inculcate the concept of nationalism, patriotism, unity and interdependence among the diverse people of Nigeria. Social skills are to be imparted through Social Studies education and contribute to national development in Nigeria as reflected in national policy on education (2013). The skills include self confidence, initiatives, power of imagination and resourcefulness. Other skills include honesty, cooperation, open-mindedness,

participation, interdependence, integrity, trust worthiness, diligence, obedience as well as national consciousness and patriotism. Social Studies inculcate democratic values, which are essentially the core values of a democratic society. The values which citizens in democracy must internalize include dignity of every human being, personal freedom, equality and justice for all, peace and order among men, economic well being for all, a sense of responsibility for and brotherhood with ones fellow beings. Nation building and development of a country depends on Social Studies education as a formidable tool. Thus, Ali Mazrui, (1992) asserted that nation building is like a construction work turning several fragile or independent states into more secured and integrated nations. The work requires inventing new institutions for the management of tensions between groups, constructing bridges between traditions and modernity, erecting new patterns of relationships, and having foundations for a new national heritage.

The Place of Social Studies in National Development

The place of Social Studies education to the development of a country cannot be under estimated. Thus, when we talk of functional education for nation building and development, it is in terms of balance growth in the society as a whole, this involves rationalization of attitudes, national integration, high standard of life for the population and the acquisition of knowledge and skills. One of Social Education extrinsic functions is to integrate the nation which is the real meaning of nation building. This is why as a qualitative and functional education, Social Studies education should be made available to all the citizens of the country in consonance with the federal government of Nigeria (NPE, 2013). It provides the basic philosophy, and policy for national education. The philosophy of Nigerian education lay strong emphasis on fostering a feeling of oneness amongst Nigerians which will lead to meaningful national integration and development.

To buttress the above, Social Studies objectives were formulated in the light of these basic educational ideas and philosophy of the nation. The following, among others, are some of the objectives of Social Studies: Inform the child and help him know about the physical and economic environment in which he lives, Make the child become aware of the natural, economic, religious, cultural and other man-made resources around him, Make the child know the culture of his people as well as those of other people in Nigeria, Help the child understand the diversity among the people of Nigeria and wider world and lead him to see the cooperation and interdependence among them, To make the child appreciate and respect the cultural diversity in Nigeria and the world at large, To help him realize the need for cooperation, unity, and peace in his country and the world at large, To develop in the child socially desirable and positive attitudes towards other people, To enable him contribute his best toward the welfare of the society and building up a strong and united nation, Help the child develop the capacity to learn and acquire abilities such as judgment, criticism, analysis and literary arts.

From the above goals and objectives, social studies education places much emphasis on the integration of the nation, which is a critical aspect of nation-building. Social studies have it as one of its major objective to inculcate in the learner the knowledge of the culture of his people as well as those of other peoples in Nigeria. This will enable the learner to appreciate culture other than his own and therefore tolerate one another. The teaching of social studies enables the learner to understand the diversity among the people of Nigeria and further leads them to see the cooperation and interdependence among them which are the major elements of Social Studies. In addition to the above, Social Studies Education can play the role of nation building successfully by exposing the learners to those factors that unite the nation. These factors include: economic, cultural, historical, religious and social ties among others. Finally as one of its numerous processes in contribution to nation-building, social studies further teaches the learner other things that bind them together in unity.

Challenges and Prospects of National Development In Nigeria

There are several Challenges facing National Development in Nigeria. Development whether social, economic, political or cultural is impeded in Nigeria by the Following Factors:

- **Challenge of History:** The colonizers through their various activities inadvertently sowed the seed of disunity in Nigeria. An example of such activities is the arbitrary creation of the Nigeria State and the division of Nigeria to regions (North, West and East). As a result of this, even several years after independence, Nigerians see themselves as belonging more to ethnic regions than the country.
- **Religious challenge:** In Nigeria Religious fanatics frequently use the two major religions (Christianity and Islam) in dividing rather than uniting the people. Example of this are the Maitatsine religious uprising in Kano and Yola, (1980 and 1982), the Kafanchan religious riots of 1987, which spread to some parts of Northern Nigeria, the Kaduna religious riots of 1996, the Ilorin religious riots of January 2000 and the Sharia riots of February 2000S in Kaduna that spread to Aba and other parts of the country.
- **Bad Leadership and Followership:** This is manifested through tribalism, nepotism, corruption and "divide and rule" which our leaders use to ensure that they keep themselves perpetually in office. They do this by promoting ethnicity and sectional loyalties instead of nationalism and the value good citizenship.
- **Ethnicity:** It is very glaring in Nigeria that tribalism, and religion has always served the interest of the ruling class in keeping the people confused on their legitimate rights. There were signs that Nigeria at the time of independence gave the Nigerian people a togetherness but not unity; it gave Nigeria confidence but not strength. It is a convenient device to perpetuate the

people's ethnicity and religion-at the expense of addressing the real social, political and economic issues.

- **Skewed Development:** In Nigeria, development more often than not is one sided, that is in favour of those in power and the urban areas. This breeds ill-feeling and resentment among the marginalized group.
- **Ignorance:** The low level of literacy brings about low-level consciousness. This makes Nigerians to be highly suspicious of one another and to be looked upon as a group that is manipulated for inordinate reasons.
- **Language:** Language has become another force to reckon with in fields of human endeavour throughout Nigeria. Whenever you cannot speak the language of the people you work or interact with, things become difficult to achieve. Inability of some candidates to speak the local language of the people makes it impossible for them to secure jobs or gains employment in a place outside theirs. In commercial enterprises, understanding the language of the people you are dealing with makes you half through in all problems of trade transaction. It becomes fairly difficult to get contracts in areas that are alien to the contractor. Thus, instead of merits, language now becomes a factor to consider in works, admissions, etc.
- **Politics:** This factor has become very important in Nigeria today. The party to which one belongs now dictates the activities of people in today's Nigerian politics. There have been cases where the peace and stability of the nation had been affected as a result of the nature of political activities of the period. In 1962, there were the Western crises and the exchange of chairs as weapons in the parliament. Political crisis have in the past led to instability and chaos which eventually led to coup-detat and change of government people of the same blood and religion

because of their differences in political issues. Even people of the same party have become divided over some national issues that are crucial. In fact the greater force that can cause disintegration of any nation is the political trends in the nation.

- **Natural- Resources:** The country is highly diversified in distribution of natural resources. While some communities are popular for the production of both mineral and forest products, some have limited mineral products. When it comes to revenue allocation, states where Nigeria gets the highest money from the mineral products of the place continue to cry out for more or special consideration. Revenue allocation has become a sensitive issue in Nigerian politics today. Thus people call for fair distribution of Federal projects. Niger-Delta crisis is an example. HIV(AIDS) .The Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS): AIDS, caused by an attack of the Human T-Cell Lymph tropic Virus, and without a definite treatment at present, leads to death. This being so, AIDS is a threat to the human species and the human race, and by extension, to Social Studies since it is human beings who are interested and involved in Social Studies. Social Studies educators must vigorously participate in the growth of knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for controlling and overcoming AIDS.
- **Poverty:** A poor nation lives in social isolation, insecurity, psychological distress and lack of freedom. Nigeria as a nation remains poor in the midst of abundant natural and human resources, which should not be so. Stanley (1987) defines poverty as "a state of being poor, despised, looked down upon and most significantly, lacking things that translate into good physical and mental health. Poverty simply refers to economic and social inequality. It could mean scarcity, want, inferiority or lack. Poverty means denial of choices and basic opportunities, which enable one to live a

tolerable life materially, psychologically and culturally. When people live in a healthy, peaceful and loving environment without hunger, democratic virtues cannot be acquired, and the country cannot progress and develop.

- **Corruption:** One of the greatest threats to nation-building in Nigeria is the problem of corruption. As a social vice, it has spread so much in Nigeria society that many people especially scholar's today feel that corruption is synonymous with Nigeria. Cases and instances of corruption became more rampant in the early 1970s, with the increase in the monetary resources available to the country as a result of prominence of crude oil as foreign exchange earner. Corruption has become so widespread that is clearly seen in different forms at all facets of the society, villages community, local government, state as well as the federal government. In the government sector, corruption ranges from the wrong use of government property, the abuse of public office for private gains, diversion of public funds to private use as well as receiving bribes from contractors before contracts are awarded. The period since independence has witnessed Nigeria's political and economic growth being delayed by corruption among public officials in alliance with individuals from the private sector. Huge amount of scarce resources earmarked for development projects are siphoned and converted to private use. Contracts are unilaterally awarded by certain officials in the government with little or no regard for the necessity of such a project. These white elephant project did a lot of harm to the economic life of the nation.

Achieving National Development in Nigeria

There should be political education for both leaders and followers. Our political leaders, both civilians and soldiers, should be educated to rise above petty jealousy and ethnic chauvinism. There is that urgent need to educate

our leaders to be national in outlook and take comments or criticism in good faith. We need to allow people to express their views without ethnic bias. We should avoid a situation where people are labelled as unpatriotic because they are radicals; that they are not from the area of the people in power or at the corridor of power. Therefore, Nigeria needs dynamic and forward-looking leaders who are naturally conscious that Nigeria is greater than an individual or an ethnic group.

Nation-building will be possible when Nigerians, regardless of their geographical, ethnic, social, religious, economic, political affiliation, and other considerations appreciate the bitter truth that Nigeria belongs to all of us. Nigerians should be conscious of the fact that it is not the fundamental birth-right of any ethnic group to remain perpetually in power, or for a particular ethnic group to produce the president, or some notable quarters to believe that some ethnic groups are born to rule, some are diplomatic in earning their living, while some are technologically oriented (Sule, 1993), Nigerian leaders should develop "political will" to fight corruption to a standstill, Political parties should not be regionally or stately based, rather they should be national in outlook. The formation of the two political parties-the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republic Convention (NRC) under the Babangida's administration was a right step in the right direction and a serious attempt at promoting nation-building. The nullification of June 12, 1993 election results has equally embittered many Nigerians, which cut across ethnic, religious, political barriers etc. In fact, shortly after the annulment, president Babangida came under severe attack for bringing dishonour to the Nigerian Armed Forces. Hence, it is therefore in the best interest of Nigerians that political parties should not be dominated by a particular ethnic group or groups rather they should be national in outlook, Government should not interfere in religious matters.

Government, whether Federal, State or local, should remain neutral and be free from religious issues. They should adhere to the Nigerian constitution (1999:38) which pronounces that the government of the Nigerian

federation or state shall not adopt any religion as state religion, Public enlightenment should be embarked upon to make Nigerians have a sense of belonging and thereby promote nation-building, Rewarding outstanding performances by the three tiers of government will help to promote nation-building. In the same vein, offenders should be punished however important they may be in the society. Hence no offender should be treated like a sacred cow that cannot be slaughtered, The introduction of the NYSC is also a calculated attempt at nation building although it is fast losing its relevance in the present day Nigeria due to insecurity and poverty driven economy.

Recommendations

Nigerian Government should organize enlightenment campaign Programme through National Orientation Agency to enhance the skill of nation- building among Nigerian youth. Social Studies Education should be made an Educational Programme that is compulsory to all learners at all levels of Nigerian Education. Nation- building and National Development should be made more prominent in NYSC Orientation Programme. Citizenship Education should be taught and made compulsory at all School levels.

Values teaching should be made more relevant at the class room level at both Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Schools in Nigeria. Government should provide Instructional Materials for teaching the Subject. Rights, Duties and Obligation of Citizens should be outlined so that they can be aware of it. Morals, Values, Folkways and Culture should be taught in Schools, Good relationship among different Ethnic group should be encouraged, More programmes should be organized on Social Media to enhances the Society understanding on how to develop and contribute to their Community and more Qualified Social Studies

teachers should be employed in teaching Social Studies and Morals in the Society.

Conclusion

It has been established that Social Studies Education is a veritable tool in the building processes of a Nation and a dependable apparatus for evolving good citizenry for National Development. It enables citizens to develop positive attitudes toward other people, to be honest and trustworthy, respect rights of others, paying tax, vote and be voted for, be a good neighbour to others, be informed about the world around them, protect the environment, taking part in Government, participating in community growth, reporting criminals and helping one another. If all these are done and many more through the teaching of Social Studies, National Development and Sustainable Development will be achieved all over the world without compromising the future.

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