
**NATION BUILDING, RESTRUCTURING AND SOCIAL
STUDIES IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES
AND PROSPECTS**

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Abstract

Social Studies is presumed to study human beings' interaction holistically within and with their environments. 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 lead to national development. This paper therefore examines the concept of nation-building and the task of Social Studies education in enhancing national development in Nigeria. It also gives an overview of the challenges of nation-building and Social Studies in Nigeria. It suggests practical steps be taken so that through Social Studies the desired national development will be enhanced in Nigeria.

Keywords: Restructuring, Challenges, Prospects, Social Studies.

Introduction

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 people together for the purpose of achieving common objectives. The concept of nation-building cannot be understood without the help of certain key concepts such as the nation, national identity, nation-state, and nationalism. The term “nation” has been defined by multiple philosophers, scholars, and practitioners. These definitions range from essentialist ones that reify certain characteristics as purely national ones (Herder, 2004; Fichte, 2008) to more constructivist ones highlighting collective ascription as a key element for the existence of a nation. Nigeria is a pluralist society comprising over two hundred and fifty different ethnic groups (Omolade, 2006; Irukwu, 2007; Williams, 2008; Falola & Heaton, 2008; Ofoeze, 2009). There are approximately two hundred and fifty different languages and over four hundred dialects (Fadeiye, 2005; Falola & Heaton, 2008).

Nigeria seeks to be one unified nation, with a single purpose and with a people who share common goals. Since Nigeria achieved independence in 1960, successive governments have sought to foster this single identity through education, and specifically Social Studies. The efforts of educators from Ohio University who sought to introduce the teaching of Social Studies into Teachers’ Colleges in the former Western Region of Nigeria in 1958 served as a catalyst for the introduction of Social Studies into the school curriculum immediately after independence. Its entry into the curriculum at this time was short-lived because there were no schools in which the subject could be taught but it was reintroduced in 1963 to enable learners to learn about themselves, societal problems and the wider communities in which they live. Social Studies, with its integrated approach to learning, was seen as being capable of cutting across artificial subject divisions and presenting knowledge as an integrated whole. In view of the fact that Social Studies in the Nigerian context deals with an interplay of various factors; political, economic, cultural, physical, technological - the learner develops an integrated view of reality that enables him or her to make well-thought-out and rational suggestions geared towards national development.

Finally, a primordial perspective that essentializes attributes cannot help us explain identity change (Laitin, 2007) or the timing of national awakenings. Regardless of the definition of the nation and debates about the origins of nationalism, most scholars agree that nationalism the political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent (Gellner, 2006) is one of the most potent ideologies in modern times. In fact, what differentiates an ethnic group from a stateless national group is the fact that the former is not motivated by a nationalist ideology, namely the belief that the world is divided into national units (nation-states), that the primary loyalty should be to the nation and not to the family, the kinship group, or some other local or supranational unit, accompanied by a claim to sovereignty over a territorially bounded homeland.

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 jumpstarted from outside. It comprises elements of genuine self-rule creating an effective governing institution, cultural match and the need for a strategic orientation that involves a 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 reorganization 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. Accordingly, Aisha (2020) posited that one cannot avoid concerns with social and political issues while focusing on goals, ideals and economic matters. It is against this background that this paper examined the synergy among nation building, national development and Social Studies. It equally explored the place of Social Studies in national development and

examined the challenges and prospects of national development for the realization of Nigeria's development aspirations.

Synergy Among Nation-Building, National Development and Social Studies

Social Studies as a mega force in 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, initiative, power of imagination and resourcefulness. Other skills include honesty, cooperation, open-mindedness, participation, interdependence, integrity, trustworthiness, 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 a democracy must internalize include the 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.

The Place of Social Studies in National Development

The place of Social Studies in the development of a country cannot be underestimated. 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 Studies' 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 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; make the child appreciate and respect the cultural diversity in Nigeria and the world at large; help him realize the need for cooperation, unity, and peace in his country and the world at large; develop in the child socially desirable and positive attitudes towards other people; enable him to contribute his best toward the welfare of 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, Socials Studies 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 objectives 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 cultures 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, Social Studies 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

Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) asserted that development could be seen as the process of empowering people to maximize their potentials and the ability to exploit nature to meet daily human needs. It can also be seen as a process by which quality of human lives and capacity to surmount daily needs are considerably improved. 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. Also, language has become another force to reckon with in fields of human endeavor 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.

Natural Resources

The country is highly diversified in distribution of natural resources. While some communities are popular for the production of both minerals 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 continues 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.

Poverty

Nigeria still wallows in abject poverty, high level of unemployment and starvation in spite of her huge resources endowment. This has greatly affected her quest to improved quality of life of her citizen and in other to successfully enhance meaningful development, effective strategies must be evolved with personnel that will religiously and faithfully implement it (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011).

Corruption

One of the greatest threats to nation-building in Nigeria is the problem of corruption. Nigerian state is corrupt, managed by corrupt leaders who have made the state an instrument of capital accumulation, rather than using it to protect the interest of the citizenry. A very good plan supervised by a thoroughly corrupt state can hardly do a thoroughly good job (Mimiko, 1998). Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2017) asserted that corruption and development are antithetical to each other, the two cannot cohabit, and so, where one is present, the other suffers

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 do a lot of harm to the economic life of the nation.

Conclusion

It has been established that Social Studies 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.

Way Forward

Nigerian Government should organize enlightenment campaign programme through National Orientation Agency to enhance the skill of nation- building among Nigerian youths. Social Studies 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 enhance the Society's 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.

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