
**UNITY IN DIVERSITY: IMPLEMENTATION OF
SECONDARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM
FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF NIGERIAN UNITY FOR
GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

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Abstract

National unity is significant in the quest for a strong, united and prosperous nation. This idea seemed not to be understood by Nigerians as evident in the prevalence of social vices, social unrest, ethnic clashes and religious disputes across the country. Nigeria is one of the countries of the world that is politically, linguistically, culturally and religiously diverged. Despite different programmes put in place to inculcate spirit of unity among citizens, these divergences have been fuelling disunity rather than promoting oneness, without which it will be difficult to attain global sustainable development. This calls for concern as to whether those engaging in violent behaviours adequately benefited from unity enhanced programmes, which include Social Studies. This paper, therefore, examined the implementation of Secondary School Social Studies curriculum for the attainment of Nigerian oneness for global sustainable development in the 21st century. The paper gave credence to the meaning

of national unity and Social Studies; the objectives, as well as curriculum of Social Studies; the role of Social Studies in promoting national in Nigeria; and the role of national unity in global sustainable development. The paper concludes that Social Studies is not only significant in promoting national unity and overall development of the country, but also facilitate the attainment of global sustainable development agenda of the 21st century. It was, therefore, recommended among others that pragmatic instructional approaches should be used in the teaching of Social Studies so as to arouse the intellectual curiosity of students.

Keywords: Development, Implementation, Social Studies, Sustainability, Unity in diversity.

Introduction

National unity is significant in the quest for a strong, united and prosperous nation. Unity is among the factors dictating the direction of development of every society. Without the spirit of oneness among members of a society, such a society will be stagnant. The significance of unity was recognized as a driven factor for global progress by the United Nations. This recognition was evident in the declaration made in 1998 regarding the establishment of harmonious relationship among people of the world. In a similar manner, the quest to achieve unity is embedded in the purpose of establishing the African union (African Union Commission, 2012). The need to achieve this objective led to the incorporation of security and peace council in countries like Cairo and Egypt in the year 1993; Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Lusaka and Zambia in the year 2011; and the promulgation of the Solidarity for Peace and Security in Africa on the 8th November, 2012 (African Union Commission, 2012).

At the national level, Nigerian government at the federal level also viewed unity as a principal factor for development. This commendation is contained in the national objectives enclosed as necessary foundation for National Policy on Education by the Federal

Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2016). This suggests that the place of unity cannot be neglected if progress and development must be recorded in the country. This is which it is paramount that every nation must strive to achieve greater unity. Nigerians did not seem to understand this concept, as seen by the widespread occurrence of social vices, societal turmoil, ethnic conflicts, and religious disagreements. Nigeria is one of the nations in the globe with diverse politics, linguistics, cultures, and religions. The lack of oneness, without which it will be difficult to achieve global sustainable development, has been fueled by divergences rather than oneness, despite various programs put in place to instill a feeling of solidarity among residents. This raises questions about whether programs that promote unity and integrate Social Studies instruction effectively helped those who engage in violent behavior. Social Studies was introduced into the school curriculum as a problem solving subject for achieving unity in diversity. The introduction of the subject started in America, followed by the British and later African nations among which is Nigeria.

This study theoretically examined the implementation of Secondary School Social Studies Curriculum for the attainment of Nigerian oneness for global sustainable development in the 21st century. The paper gave credence to the meaning of national unity and Social Studies; the objectives, as well as curriculum of Social Studies; the role of Social Studies in promoting national in Nigeria; and the role of national unity in global sustainable development.

Conceptual Issues

National unity involves having the feeling of oneness towards one's own country not minding individual differences in the areas of race, religion, culture or caste. It has to do with national spirit and the feeling unite people of different beliefs and dialects together in a common activity or endeavor (Ashiwaju, 2002). For national unity to take effect, individuals must have worked together to build systems capable of enhancing the prosperity of the nation and its citizens (Hauwa, 2021). With respect to this assertion, Nigeria leveraged on national unity as one of the strongest weapons

employed for the attainment of independence. This assertion is contained in the speech delivered by the first prime minister of Nigeria, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, during the independence of the country on 1st October, 1960. The, then, prime minister said' "... We are indeed proud to have achieved our independence, and proud that our efforts should have constituted to this happy event" (Ezeoba & Okafor, 2019). In the statement, collective nouns was used to clearly indicate that it wasn't one person's effort, but indeed a joint effort of all Nigerians not minding their religious affiliation, ethnic groups, and gender (Torpev, 2013).

The significance of Nigeria unity was reiterated by the then head of state of the federal republic of Nigeria, General Yakubu Gowon after the civil war of 1964 that lasted for 30 months. Despite the civil war that put the nation's unity at stake, Nigerians demonstrated unity in diversity by coming together as indivisible entity. In his speech after the war, General Yakubu Gowon calls for the need to pursue the attainment of reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reconciliation for the national unity, after which he declared general amnesty for those that perpetrated the civil war (Ezeoba & Okafor, 2019). Despite number of challenges that confront the nation, including coup plans that over threw various civilian and military regimes, and the annulment of June 12 Presidential election of 1993, Nigeria continues to live in unity (Torpev, 2013). The crises of numerous ethnic, social, and religious militant organizations, in particular, has caused many Nigerians to notice a bold handwriting on the wall warning that the unity of the country is under danger. These might have necessitated Ezeoba (2012)'s opinion that the country is in disunity. This is premised on the prevalence of inter-tribal wars happening in some parts of the country, banditry, youth restiveness, police brutality, kidnap incidences, and extra judicial killings, militancy, incidence of jail breaking, and the recent attack on a Catholic church in Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria. If these waves of vices are not quickly and effectively checked, it will undermine the unity of the entire country (Laraba, 2015).

Nigerians feel that unity is a necessary condition for building a better Nigeria because it is so highly demanded in the nation. In keeping with this, the 1999 Nigerian constitution's preamble focused

on peace and togetherness as the ideal way for Nigerians to live (FRN 2016). The Nigeria National Policy on Education emphasized that Nigeria unity and harmony are the basic principles that would make the country to remain indivisible, in dissolvable, democratic and sovereign nation which was founded on the bases of freedom, equality and justice (FRN 2004). The success or otherwise of this country depends on harmonies living among the populace. The unity of Nigeria is therefore an issue that cannot be taken for granted. In achieving this unity, Social Studies as a problem solving subject has role to play.

Social Studies is a field of study that incorporates different discipline, especially disciplines in social science and humanities. As put forward by Odor and Nwaham (2005), the study of Social Studies involves unveiling man and the outcome of his interactions with his political, economic, physical, psychological and cultural environment. As an interdisciplinary body of knowledge, Social Studies it provides people with valuable information necessary for life, help people to acquire desirable attitudes, social habits, values, and other useful skills that are paramount for the individual and societal survival (Hauwa, 2021). In relation this, Ezoba (2012) stressed that the messages of Social Studies are needed for national unity. This is on the notion that the subject is designed to accommodate human differences that often fuel disunity. The contents of Social Studies are derived from social science subjects that are meant for the reformation of human behavior for unity, peace and development.

By nature, the subject is pragmatic, and as pragmatic is about activities of mankind, and holistically present learning experiences to learners using the content of social science subject. This invariably means that it places man as a central point in its studies, dealing with how the environment is influenced by man and how man in turn influences his environment. As noted by Fagbeyinbo (2004), Social Studies is capable of opening the eyes of learners to how they can manipulate and favorably adjust to a particular environment. It was in relation to this that Ezeuzo (2011) views it as a significant weapon for promotion of peaceful and harmonious living among Nigerians. These perceptions are in consonance with the objectives

of Social Studies which originated from the Nigeria national objective (Okonkwo, 2004) thus: A free and democratic society, where views and interest of the members of the nation are paramount. The society that always embraces justice and truth, in order to uphold the nation. The just egalitarian society is capable of seeing each citizen as one and none is above the law. To build a united, strong and self-reliance nation, which would not be dependable but industrious and responsible to feed themselves; and building a great and dynamic economy and land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (FRN, 2016).

A thoughtful look at the about national objectives shows that the quest for peace and unity of Nigeria for national development informed the formulation of the objectives (Laraba, 2015). In line with the national objectives, Social Studies is meant to: (a) develop good citizenship capable of uplifting moral character and also promote social understanding in the society; (b) promote unity and economic development of the nation; (c) prepare students for the world of work and create awareness problems that are likely to be encountered daily; (d) ensures the development of critical thinking, problem solving skills and the ability to decision for the survival and progress of the nation; (e) promote acculturation and socialization spirit among citizens in the society; and (f) develop a capacity to acquire basic skills such as listening, analysis, observation, which are essential for sound judgment. This suggest that, truly, Social Studies objectives originates from the national objective and its contents is structured towards the achievement of the objectives and therefore making it possible to bring unity and progress for Nigeria's national development.

Curriculum can be said to be planned and unplanned learning experiences which learners are exposed to both within and outside the school premises for which the school is saddled with the responsibility. It is the channel for attaining the goals, aspiration and expectation of the society. This is premised on the need to ensure that awareness and consciousness are created in the society and to also see to the development of abilities, knowledge and skills which, to some level, have been attained (Hauwa, 2021). It can be deduced from the general goals of introducing Social Studies it is means to

lays emphasis on effective learning domain. This, by implication will make it possible for the learners to be trained such that they will appreciate the need for unity in diversity, develop the spirit of oneness and interdependence to members of local and the international communities.

Odedele and Egotanwa (2004) endorsed the inclusion of national unity and nation integration in the Social Studies curriculum by highlighting the necessity of national integration for Nigeria's prosperity, peace, and understanding. The argument in favor of national integration is that it tends to foster a sense of unity, dependence, and collaboration among citizens for the fulfillment of our wants and services. In support of this, Enu and Effiom (2012) believed that Social Studies curricula naturally tend to give students the opportunity they need to apply their civic knowledge, skills, and values toward the development of solutions to pressing issues in classrooms or society at large. The Social Studies education curriculum in Nigeria should be developed to set the country's society on a course for growth and development in order to achieve national integration. This is where Social Studies education plays a role in promoting national growth and integration.

Role of Social Studies in Promoting and National Unity

The introduction of Social Studies into the curriculum was to solving pressing Nigerian problems. Nigerian experienced what can be called colonial trauma and it was necessary to get organized programmes that could help in alienating them from colonial mentality (Fageyinbo, 2004). Also, the civil war that happened in the country in 1970-72 also created a lot of differences among the citizens, especially due to divergences ethnic, historical backgrounds and cultural affiliations. Hence; it necessitated the introduction of Social Studies as a tool for healing the wounds of the civil war, and equally achieving unity despite our diversity. This is in relation to the observation of Laraba (2015) that Social Studies is capable of promoting much needed unity, integration and stability.

In order to achieve the purpose for which it was introduced,

Social Studies education focuses attention on different aspects of human life, among which are; the development of learner's attitudes; knowledge, skills and values. These areas of concentration go a long way in determining how peaceful people will live with one another and contribute meaningfully to societal development. This probably necessitated the opinion of the Sebiomo (2012) that, the need to introduce Social Studies programme premised on the fact that the society requires formal institution to develop understanding, attitude, skills, and action concerning human relationship with his environment. This opinion was supported by Sebiomo (2012)'s assertion that, Social Studies promotes attitudinal change among citizens especially through the citizenship education component. The citizenship education component of Social Studies talks about peaceful co-existence, harmonious living and unity in diversity.

Another significant effort towards the attainment of Nigeria's oneness is the inclusion of peace education in Social Studies curriculum. Peace education, as described by Torpev (2013), involves the acquisition of values, knowledge and the development of positive attitudes towards self, significant others and the environment. This, this means that effective implementation of Social Studies curriculum cannot be neglected in the quest to achieve stability in Nigeria Society.

The teaching of Social Studies involves a lot of co-curricular and classroom activities. To start with, the curriculum must be structured in such a manner that it will implant societal values and spirit of unity in the learners. Learners should be introduced to the likely impacts of peace and unity on the developmental plans and outcomes of the country. Furtherance to that, reference should constantly be made to nationalists and other meaningful Nigerians who are currently making concerted efforts towards the unity and progress of Nigeria. This could help in planting spirit of patriotism in the learners and their siblings, by extension. Attention should be geared towards the teaching of the importance of unity in diversity and the need to be united despite our cultural differences.

Dialogue could be initiated by teachers on issues relating to national unity, having carefully and successfully exposed the learners to the concept. This will open their mind to the brain behind the call for unity in diversity. Parents can also be carried along in the league

towards achieving oneness. This can be done by stressing the issue of harmonious living with parents during parent-teacher association meeting. Doing this could significantly assist in reducing the prevalence of communal crisis which affects the progress of the affected communities and the nation at large. Above all, a teacher's dedication to his job may gain him respect in the community, particularly because they may be asked to mediate when conflicts threaten to divide a group of people.

Role of National Unity in Global Sustainable Development in the 21st Century

Sustainable development is the kind of developmental outcomes that satisfies the immediate needs of the people without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to get their need met and safeguard future livelihoods (Jimoh, 2014). It is a development plan or vision that put population, natural resources, animal and plant species, ecosystems into considerations, while working towards the attainment of poverty reduction, gender equality, universal education, human rights, intercultural dialogue, and human security (Adams, 2006; Kayode, 2012). This implies that where there is sustainable development, the country will be in control of its national resources so that future generations' interests and economic wellbeing are not mortgaged. Development is said to be sustainable if it provides better national health, long-term growth, prosperity, economic progress, and an egalitarian and better society without compromising equitable resource distribution, social justice and human dignity (Akinjide, 2011). Development must address three main things, which are fairness, environmental protection, and efficiency. These can only be possible where the social, environmental, and economic balance are effectively preserved (Jimoh, 2014). This demand can only be achieved when there is peace and unity. Without spirit of unity, social vices will be the order of the day and this will consequently impaired the quest for shelter, good food, and protection of life and properties. Spirit of unity is needed to embrace developmental programmes and outcomes. However, disunity will generate violence and consequently destroy

properties that are supposed to improve people's standard of living. For instance, the End SARS protest embarked on by the Nigerian youths in 2020 to register their displeasure with the government led to the destruction of multi-billion naira properties. Similarly, the issue of banditry and kidnapping in the country has led to the destruction of many lives and properties. Apart from the destruction of properties, the rate of hunger in the land has drastically increased because people could no longer safely engage in farm activities. All these problems are preventing the attainment of global sustainable development goals in the country.

Conclusion

The discussion of this paper points to the fact that the concept of unity cannot be removed from Social Studies curriculum. Any attempt to do so will make the subject become vague. This is more reason why most scholars view unity in diversity as one of the major pillars that holds Social Studies curriculum and sustainable national and global development. Absence of unity the core value of Nigerian will impose threat on the existence of the nation and its association with other countries of the world. This is premised on the fact that it is only through unity that peace will reign. When there is peace citizens will have their hands on deck so as to contribute their quota towards national development and survival.

Suggestions

The Social Studies Educationists Association of Nigeria should continue in their effort to generate enthusiasm in the indebt study of social and cultural institutions for the promotion of knowledge and the stability of Nigerian society. Better awareness regarding this can be created through conferences organized at both local and international level. Pragmatic instructional approaches should be used in the teaching of Social Studies so as to arouse the intellectual curiosity of students. Social Studies curriculum should be periodically reviewed to meet the current challenging situations capable of threatening the unity of the Nigeria. The teaching and learning of Social Studies should continue to the university level.

This will help in the appreciation and sustainability of the value of unity in diversity by learners. All the tiers of government should be asked to honor those who have, in one way or the other, demonstrated good character for the unity of Nigeria.

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