

SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AS A PANACEA FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria as a nation is besieged with several national issues such as insecurity of life and property, kidnapping, robbery, assassination, etc. This problem has brought about retrogression and has contributed to the security challenges inherent in Nigeria. The resultant effect of this state of insecurity is that the country is left to drift about, suffering from a lot of brain drain of intellectuals to other more peaceful and secured countries. Section 14 (1) of chapter 2 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria captures the importance of security when it states that security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of Government. Seen this way, security is a social contract between the state and its citizens, in which the former is expected to protect, defend and provide for the latter in the public area. Based on this prevailing condition the paper examined how the knowledge of social studies education could be a vehicle

in solving the problem of national insecurity in Nigeria. The purpose of this paper, therefore, was to examine the role of social studies education in preparing the young people to be good citizens in a world that is becoming more and more complex. The study found that social studies places a premium on development and inculcation of right attitude, values, feelings and national consciousness on the youth. In conclusion, youths that are adequately informed, educated and have acquired basic social skills in the society cannot be a security threat to national existence. The paper recommended the need to adopt a more people and society-oriented syllabus in our public schools to enable the youths to be acquainted with the security implications of any action they take.

Keywords: Social Studies, Education, Sustainability, National Security, Nigeria

Introduction

It is a truism that Nigeria has lost its pride of place among the comity of nations in spite of her rich human capital development and abundant natural resources. Indeed, Nigeria is still described as a destabilized and failing nation because of the numerous political and social vices prevalent in the system. In fact, Nigeria is experiencing systematic failure in political, social economic and technological aspects of the nation's life; no doubt, the nation is plagued by political instability, porous border, flagrant disregard for the rule of law, sectarian violence, advanced fee fraud – 419, militancy, terrorism, endemic corruption, electoral violence and thuggery which are all causes of

insecurity. According to US Department of States's report on terrorism (2019), America classified Nigeria as a security risk state and a terror prone nation along with fourteen other countries, namely Yemen, Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Libya, Afghanistan, etc. Recently, the same America described Nigeria as the most dangerous place for Christianity due to activities of Boko Haram, herdsmen, bandits, etc. The rate of violence, insecurity and ethnic clashes is already threatening the century old aspirations of the founding fathers of Nigeria in developing a strong, reliable and egalitarian country. The problem of national insecurity is manifested in various challenges facing the nation.

Several efforts have been made by stakeholders in Nigeria to address some of the problems with little or no effect in improving national security (Oladiti, 2014; Kupoluyi, 2014; Gbadamosi, 2013). This may be as a result of narrowing security issues to a military approach alone, but national security cannot be narrowed down to defense and military might alone. It is wider than that. It is this narrow conception of national security, according to

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Orikpe (2013), that forms the basis for the disproportionate budgetary allocation of funds as the case is to "ensure the security of lives and property", however, to the utter neglect of other equally important sectors of the economy such as education that impact directly or indirectly on national security. Therefore, this observation underscores the need to try the education option as a panacea for assuaging the drift thereby guaranteeing national security. Education is vital for socio-economic and political development. It is an instrument par excellence for national development. It is a potent tool in graduating families out of poverty and promoting social security. Education is the advances the frontier for social justice and the wheels of social mobility and redistribution of societal wealth (National Policy on Education, 2004). Thus, through school subjects such as Social Studies, students imbibe good societal values. Social Studies, which is one of the core subjects in Nigerian schools, gained momentum as a school subject from 1977 especially after the introduction of the new National Policy on Education (NPE) popularly known as the 6-3-3-4 system.

Social studies, like other school subjects, has been subjected to various definitions by scholars. For instance, the Committee on Primary School Social Studies Programme (1971) and the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC, 1983), now Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), defines Social Studies as common learning of human interaction with the social and physical environment. Explaining further, the Committee states that Social Studies is not only a study, but a way of life; of how human influences, and is being influenced by the physical, social, political, economic, psychological and cultural environments. It is the totality of experience and understanding a child gets having been exposed to a course of study based on human's problems in his or her environment, the factors that are normally responsible in human's interactions with this environment, and the resulting ways of life of human beings. The subject was adopted in Nigeria as a result of the quest for relevance in the Nigerian education (Jekayinfa, 2011). The traditional subjects like geography, history and civics inherited from the colonial education system

were criticized for not being relevant both in purpose and content to the immediate needs of the Nigerian child and the society at large. The traditional subjects also encouraged learners to know more about the colonial master's country than about their own environment and the pressing problems in their society (Jekayinfa, 2011). The present rising waves of insecurity have greatly emphasized the need to intensify the teaching of social studies education in Nigerian. Every youth ought to see himself/herself as a stakeholder in the Nigerian project, by exercising all requisite citizenship roles and responsibilities. The respect for human life and the dignity of labour should be inculcated in our children at the early age. Social studies education places youth on a sound pedestal to defend our nascent democracy instead of being destructive agents. In view of the foregoing, the researchers wish to interrogate the importance of the knowledge of social studies in curbing security issues facing the country in order to achieve sustainable national security.

National Security

The term "security" may be looked at as a state of being protected from danger or anxiety. For a nation, security connotes conditions of peace, stability, order and progress. National security has been construed in different ways, each of which emphasized vital factors underlying ideals. Brennan (1961) holds that national security is the protection of national survival; national security is to be understood in terms of the desire and capacity for self-defense. Ochoche (1998) holds that national security focuses on the amassment of military armament, personnel and expenditure. It was expanded to include international economics, long term goals of national development and reconciliation. These are very important for the security of any nation. With this approach, Asad (2007) opines that national security cannot be narrowed down to an exclusively military term alone. Okoli (2007) suggests that national security is more than territorial defense and should focus on the physical, social and psychological equality of life of a society and its members in the domestic setting as well as within the large regional and global system. According to Asad (2017), global development now suggests the need for another

analogous broadening definition of national security to include resources, environmental and demographic issues. The national security question involves a lot of issues. It practically touches on all spheres of human existence. The best way to approach it is from the systems theory perspective where a dislocation in any particular area of the system is bound to have an overlapping effect on other areas. The effect ranges from food security to issues of environmental degradation. It also touches on health matters and encompasses psychological security as well as arms security. A number of factors may expose a nation to danger. In that regard, national security may also be viewed as a multidimensional process whose purpose is to safeguard national values. The most fundamental values of any nation are its survival, self-preservation, and self-perpetuation. A nation that is capable of protecting herself from harm equally enjoys immense capacity for enviable development.

Insecurity has taken different dimensions in the various regions in Nigeria. For instance, in the Niger Delta region (South-South), the militants slugged it out with oil companies in the area, destroying oil companies' properties as well as Federal Government properties. In Jos-Plateau State, the Hausa and the indigenous people have been at war. In southern part of Kaduna and the rest of the North Central, there has been killings going on unabated. In South-East and South-West regions of the country, kidnapping, ritual killing and armed robbery constitute the manifestations of insecurity. Boko Haram insurgency has been the greatest challenge to internal security in the North-East, North-West and North Central from 2009 till date. Alemika (2016) postulates that insecurity can be classified into several dimensions. The most significant dimensions are: (a) Physical insecurity- violent personal and property crimes, (b) Public security- violent conflicts, insurgency and terrorism, (c) Economic insecurity- poverty, unemployment, (d) Social insecurity- illiteracy, ignorance, diseases or illness, malnutrition; water borne disease, discrimination and exclusion, (e) Human right violations- denial of fundamental rights by state and non-state actors in different states, (f) Political insecurity- denial of good and social democratic governance.

This broader view of security from the

perspective of human physiological needs is important for the attainment of physical and national security and overall peace and development, as social unrest arising from the absence of such basic-human security can indeed lead to security problems and conflicts. Apart from the socio-economic security challenges, Abubakar (2005) identifies some of the major security challenges confronting the nation to include political and electioneering conflicts, ethno-religious crises, ethnic militias, boundary disputes, cultism, criminality and organized crimes. In the same vein, Oshio (2009) opines that Nigeria is today plagued with social disorder, insecurity, poverty, illiteracy, balance of payment deficit, poor health statistics, ethnic and religious conflicts, corruption, crime and criminality and political crises. All these show that Nigeria is insecure. The problems, individually and collectively, constitute threats to the peace, security and development of the country. Unarguably, they have implications for the continuity and survival of the nation's nascent democracy.

Social Studies

Definition varies according to situations, aspirations and expectation of the people. A very careful look at the analysis of the definition of social studies education in educational literature simply shows that social studies education has been defined in the following ways. Udoh (1993) perceives social studies education as an integrative field of study which probes man's symbiotic relationships with his environments, endows man with the reflective or contemplative capacities, intellectual, affective, social and work skills to enable him to understand his world and its problems, and to rationally solve or cope with them living in the society. Mezieobi (2009) defines Social Studies education as a citizenship education; a vehicle for human skill development, ecological studies and as a value laden field of study. In view of the fact that Social Studies education contents are learner's activity-packed involving the near-total control of the learning situation by the learner in his do-it-yourself emphasis, invariably, Social Studies education de-emphasizes teacher's control of the teaching and learning process. Social studies education is learner centric or learner controlled.

The professional Social Studies education teacher functions principally as a facilitator of learning, rather than a dispenser of knowledge (Gleeson & Whitty, 1976). On the other hand, Osakwe and Itedjere (1993) state that social studies education is an integrated and interdisciplinary field of study whose ultimate aim is to produce people who are civically competent.

Oloolobuo (1992) illustrates that Social Studies education is a programme of study in which clients are exposed to carefully select physical and social environment realities, with an in-built package for the development of skills of various kinds and nurturing of values, attitude and actions conducive to the continued orderly survival of the society. Social studies education is an integrated body of knowledge formulated to equip the learner with significant values, skills, attitudes, and knowledge in order to be productively functional in the society. In acceptance, Imogie (1993) stresses that it is the particular responsibility of social studies education instruction to provide citizenship education to the young stars. Social studies education is a value laden instruction, which relates citizen obligations and duties to the state. It is a process of integrating the citizens with national policies, economic, social and technological values.

Similarly, Osakwe and Itedjere (1993) state that social studies is an integrated and interdisciplinary field of study whose ultimate aim is to produce people who are civically competent. From the foregoing definitions, it is clear that the study of social studies has something to do with moulding of the character of youths in the society, inculcation of the right values and attitudes to the youths. The imbibing of the right values and attitudes will go a long way in the management of national crises and security.

The Role of Social Studies in Ensuring Sustainable National Security in Nigeria

National security has been defined to include not only safety devices employed by government for the safety of lives and property in the country but it also includes developmental strategies put forward to actualize effective social, political, economic, and technological reforms that will bring about improvement in the quality of the people. Thus, social studies can play a vital or pivotal role in

ensuring that the nation attains her national security. A starting point perhaps is the reality that a majority of Nigerians are poor and are ravaged by hunger and starvation, religious disunity, ethnicity and political divides. Social studies as a discipline is geared towards ensuring good citizenship in Nigeria. A cursory look at the social studies curriculum at each level, primary, secondary and tertiary, will convince people that the subject is tailored towards ensuring good citizenship education in Nigeria. Social studies as a discipline afford the pupils, students, and teachers in particular and members of the public in general, the opportunity to know about the positive aspects of our socio-economic and political ideals and the factors promoting unity and solidarity among the numerous ethnic groups making up Nigeria.

Akinlaye (1997) states that social studies would offer medication and provide the needed reforms or changes in society as well as catering for its survival by removing barriers between groups and classes within society as a result of birth, occupation, language, race and religion and even between generation and ethnicities and also the schooled and unschooled, the literate and the illiterate. He concludes that social studies education would help to promote peace, co-operation, security and national pride. It is common knowledge that our society (Nigeria) today is being plagued by social vices or evils like excessive profiteering, theft, embezzlement, statism, banditry, unlawful possession of arms by the youths, ethnic bickering and struggles, and other irresponsible behaviors. Social studies can help greatly to educate the youths on the importance of peace and security in our dear nation. Social studies as a discipline, if properly programmed and effectively taught, should help to solve social problems that are facing developing countries like ours (Nigeria) where the old norms are fast losing their grips and there are no effective substitutes to replace them. No nation is self-sufficient or can produce all her needs. It is therefore necessary to understand the relationships existing between one society and another. Various topics concerning safety and national security are designed to produce good citizens that will promote national and international security. The subject inculcates in students international understanding by emphasizing the essential

oneness of the human race and making them realize the growing interdependence of nations and people.

Social studies places value on the affective domain in its attempt to promote good citizenship Education in Nigeria. In social studies, for instance, the affective domain deals with the evaluation of the attitude and values that are developed or behavioral changes that are noticeable in the pupils after a course of study. The affective domain examines the behavioral changes in pupils like respect for elders and other constituted authorities such as parents, religious organizations, government etc., love of industry, dignity of labour and other positive attitudes and values. The psychomotor domain in social studies emphasizes the development of skills, both in theory and in practice, in its attempt at ensuring good citizenship education in Nigeria. In fact, the inter-play of the cognitive and the affective domains has an effect on the performance of certain skill. These skills include the skills of sifting information, interpretation, identification, recognition, asking and answering questions, manipulation, etc. These skills are necessary for safety and national security. This statement agrees with the assertion of Akinlaye (1979) when he stated that social studies involves pupils in purposeful activities based upon observation and investigation of their immediate surroundings including their physical and social environment.

According to Dania (2012), in order to ensure a developed society devoid of insecurity, social studies education must be a course of study at all levels of our educational system and emphasis should be placed on the following critical components.

- i. **Civic and political education:** In political Development, the emphasis is on the degree of political civilization that prevails, the equality of democratic principles, the freedom of the people in the governance of states, the freedom of the press. Indeed, the quality of leadership and followership is of great essence here, among others. Therefore, students would be taught civic rights and obligations, the need for active participation in the democratization process, and payment of taxes. Others include awareness of the spirit of nationalism and

patriotism. A patriotic citizen is not only the one who can lay down his life for his country but also the one who pays his taxes promptly, the one who does not engage in bribery and corruption, the one who is not a vandal, and who shuns violence. In conclusion, social studies, through its civic education programmes, could bring about good leadership, values and attitudes, and Nigerians could easily imbibe the culture of discipline as the product of a pragmatic civic education will demonstrate patriotism and reject bad leadership.

- ii. **Value Education:** It should teach students contents that are value-laden and would promote the inculcation of virtues such as honesty, integration, hard work, contentment, discipline, cooperation, participation, integrity, trustworthiness, and open-mindedness as core values. Definitely, the inculcation of such values will promote an ideal social, physical, economic and spiritual state in the learner.
- iii. **Environmental Education:** Social studies education would create an understanding of our evolving social and physical environment as a whole in its natural, man-made, cultural and spiritual state. Therefore, for them to understand the environment, topics such as pollution and climate change should be emphasized.

Dania (2012) further notes that Social studies education is vital in all round development of an individual. An individual exposed to social studies content is given a positive orientation which will ultimately prepare him or her to function effectively in the society. Furthermore, social studies education would check the rising spate of corruption in our society. Conclusively, social studies is an indispensable veritable tool for achieving sustainable national security in Nigeria.

Conclusion

From the study so far, it is now clear that social studies places a premium on development and the inculcation of the right attitudes, values, feelings and national consciousness in the youth. Youths that are adequately informed, educated and have acquired basic social skills in the society cannot be a

security threat to the national existence; instead, they become, through the help of social studies education, assets to solving the security challenges in the country. As already highlighted in this paper security varies and as such, there are political, social, economic, and religious related security. The country cannot be adequately secured if there is political instability, economic failures and religious and ethnic disharmony in the country. Therefore, in order to be socially, politically and technologically secured, the youth and indeed the members of the public through the help of social studies education are given the right education, social skills, values and attitudes that will promote national integration, unity and security.

Recommendations

A number of measures seem to suggest themselves in developing a framework for conflict prevention management and ensuring sustainable national security in Nigeria. These include:

1. Using social studies education to bring about an improved quality of governance in the country. Through social studies education, the increasing irresponsibility of the political class and political leadership in Nigeria can be addressed. Topics like electoral law, political competition, political tolerance and consensus building can be introduced in social studies education. This will solve the problem of political instability and insecurity in the country.
2. There is the need to adopt more people-oriented programmes in the country by our political leaders instead of the selfish tendencies of our political leaders.
3. There is a need to evolve a new culture of politics through the teaching of social studies education in all our schools. This will ensure inculcating on time tolerance and political accommodation amongst the citizenry who will metamorphose into the political class in future.
4. Finally, teachers' welfare should be looked into. As we know that there is a huge difference between what one can do and what one will do when properly motivated, hence, the need to properly motivate the teachers for them to inculcate the right values, good attitude and proper orientation in the youth. This will help the youth to stay out of anything that will cause security breach, and by so doing, sustainable national security can be achieved.

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