



Social studies as catalyst for ethnic integration for national development

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Abstract

Social Studies has become a veritable tool not only for instruction but also for ethnic integrations for peaceful coexistence. The administration placed on Social Studies has designed it for the training of Nigerian children to become good citizens capable of contributing meaningfully towards national development. National integration in an ethnically, religiously and culturally diverse society like Nigeria is very crucial for the existence of peace, security and stability which are essential for the socio-economic development and progress of the country. It is on this note that the fostering of National Integration among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria has been a major pre-occupation of the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and social studies is seen as a catalyst that can inculcate in the people from various ethnic groups the spirit of togetherness, cooperation, fairness, love, faithfulness, equity, justice and sense of belonging that can educate the citizenry on the imperativeness of nation integration and unity for national development. Social studies as one of the core subjects in primary and junior secondary school stresses those cultural values that will make society grow, co-exist and develop along the modern line through the study of different ethnic cultural values. The paper approaches national integration from the stand point of discussion how social studies can serve as a catalyst to bring integration among the ethnic groups.

Keywords: social studies, ethnic development, national, catalyst

Introduction

Social Studies is a key subject in the curriculum of school in Nigeria, its introduction into schools in Nigeria dates back to the early 1960s, like any other school subjects, its acceptance by Nigerian educators and students alike has been without some misunderstanding, part of which includes the belief that, its introduction as a school subject, would eventually displace history and some social science disciplines which have been properly entrenched in the curriculum of schools (NTI, 2007). Social Studies in Nigeria is geared towards producing individuals who will not only possess the capabilities to solve their problems but also contribute to solve the societal problems like tourism and militarism inclusive. As stated by Iyewarun in Adediran and Onifade (2015) ^[3] the purpose of social studies is to prepare citizens who will perpetuate and improve their society. This could only be achieved if the child is equipped with enabling cognitive, affective and psychomotor dimension of social to introduce the students to the mode of critical thinking involved in decision making and problems solving. In the same vein, this is more reason why some scholars saw Social Studies as a discipline that assists students to acquire skills and values that will enable them to recognize and solve human problems through careful analyses and sound decision making. As a functional discipline, the learner is helped through exposure to learning experience, acquisition of skill and attitudes that will equip to face challenges of life either individual or in a group. That is to say, social studies focuses on man as the central figure and its roles in maintaining social stability and social reconstruction. The inclusion of social studies according to Haruna and Liman (2013) ^[5] in Nigeria school system is to give not only qualitative education but functional education to the

younger generation, to bring about progress in the society, not violence or conflict. Social Studies is described as a course of studies that focuses on man's behaviours and seeks to address societal problems. It is on this note that Kissock in Nuhu (2012) sees it as a programme of study which the society uses to instill in learners the knowledge, skills, attributes and actions it considers important concerning the relationship human beings have with each other, their world and themselves however social studies deals with how man can fit into the society by utilizing the necessary attitudes, values and skills. For various ethnic groups in Nigeria to be integrated Social Studies can be of use as critical and reflective thinking to solve the problems of ethnic disintegration through the inculcation of knowledge and understanding of each ethnic group for desirable values, attitudes and skills. Social Studies therefore acknowledges its strategic position and critical role in human development effect in National peace, unity and development of various ethnic groups.

Concept of Social Studies

The Concept of Social Studies as a subject of the study has been variously defined. The United States of America Commission on the Rehabilitation of Secondary Education defined Social Studies as a subject matter that is related to the organization and development of human society and man as a member of social groups (Nwanna – Nzewunwa, Girigiri and Okoh, 2007) ^[12]. Kissock in Mbaba (2007) ^[9] defines Social Studies as a programme of studies which a society uses to instill in students or learners the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions it considers important concerning the relationship human beings have with each other, their world and themselves. The above definition

suggested that Social Studies is a vehicle through which desired culture, values and norms of the society are being inculcated to its young ones. MTI (2007) ^[10] conceptualized Social Studies as a subject that deals with mans interaction with his environment in order for him to acquire the relevant skills, knowledge, attitudes and value that will make him live harmoniously with various ethnic groups in Nigeria this will help in reducing ethnic clashes. When the above definitions are sieved, it would be understood that the following important facts emerged. It is a subject that is geared towards the inculcation of skills, attitude and values for National development. It ensures the acquisition of knowledge which helps people to adapt to and subdues his environment. In view of this, Ezegebe in Igu (2009) ^[6] outlined the following as the objectives of Social Studies;

1. To help people develop valuable and socially acceptable concepts, ideals and philosophy of life.
2. To help people develop proper value judgment and ability to criticize, select and place events in the proper perspectives.
3. To help Nigerian teachers, pupils and students to discover what is good and unique in the physical, social economic environment which hitherto has been neglected.

No matter how good an educational system may be in terms of the acquisition of signs and technology, the politico-economic development derived from it can hardly be sustained if it is not built on indigenous cultural foundations and social stability. This of course is a center piece of Social Studies. To buttress this, Otite (2002) write: The degree and complexity of multiculturalists must be thoroughly researched to bring out the essential details in each culture, the structure and functions of central institutions and systems such as the family, religion, politics, the economy including land, labour division and farming, indigenous methods of capital formation, resource development and management, festivals, leadership and followership...dresses, food habits amongst people...must be taught and not kept under the rug...bring out the cultural similarities found amongst ethnic groups. The need for mutual understanding, accommodation and trust, appreciation of socio-cultural differences and why people behave differently or a shared system of interdependent economic and political activities etc. must be well understood as facts of daily life in Nigeria. The above are some of the core messages of the Social Studies curriculum. The belief is that knowledge of this by the students through Social Studies, the issue of national integration/unity in the country will be assured.

Ethnic Integration

Integration, according to Jary and Jary (2000) ^[8] is ‘the extent to which an individual experiences a sense of belonging to a social group or collectivity by virtue of sharing it norms, values, beliefs, etc’. They also defined it as “the extent to which the activity or function of different institutions or subsystems complement each other”. Thus, in the light of this definition, ethnic integration according to Ekpiwre and Aliyu (2014) ^[4] could be viewed as the extent to which individuals or groups experience togetherness and high sense of unity in all sectors as a result of sharing common norms, values and beliefs. As Ismail in Ringim and Ringim (2011) ^[16] put it, ethnic integration is the cement that binds all citizens of a country into one indivisible whole. It is a feeling of oneness which transcends cultural, religious, linguistic

and ethnic fragmentation. Saleh (2010) further viewed it as the total subordination of oneself or group interests to national goals and interest.

Ethnic Conflict

Ethnic Conflict according to Ekpiwre and Aliyu (2014) ^[4] is made up of two key concepts, namely, ethnic group and conflict. An ethnic group is a group of people who consider themselves, or are considered by others, as sharing a common identity that arises from a collective sense of having a common and distinctive history. Usually, an ethnic group has its own distinctive culture, customs, norms, traditions, beliefs as well as language which separate it from other ethnic groups (Jary & Jary, 2000 ^[8]; Scott & Marshal, 2009) ^[19]. Jary and Jary (2000) ^[8] defined conflict “as the overt struggle between individuals or groups within a society, or between nation states”. They go further to state that “in any society conflict may occur between (for example) two or more people, social movements, interest groupings, classes, genders, organizations, political parties and ethnic, racial or religious collectivities” On the other hand, Abraham in Nwosu (2010) ^[13] saw conflict as the crisis carried out by individuals or groups within particular setting against other individuals or groups and or property with the intent to cause injury or death to a person and to damage or destruction to property in relation to a particular subject-matter in which ever case those involved have unpalatable experiences. Accord in Nwosu (2010) ^[13] gave a broader definition of conflict as “an interaction between at least two or more people who are competing over perceived or actual goals or values with the aim of beating an opponent or having a joint solution”. The author went further to state that during conflict each individual or group tries to confront the other with opposing actions or counter actions while each attempts to overcome the other in any form possible. Accord posits still that “conflict is a situation in which seemingly incompatible elements exert force in opposing or divergent directions”. A synthesis of the above definitions implies that ethnic conflict represents all forms of antagonistic interactions involving disagreements, arguments and misunderstandings between ethnic groups over ideals, goals and values. It involves the act of deliberately interfering with [other ethnic group’s goal achievement.

Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria

Ethnic conflict in Nigeria is as old as the country’s independence. The first ethnic violence that comes to mind is the Nigerian civil war. The civil war lasted for almost three years from May, 1967 to January, 1970 which the world watched in horror as an estimated one million people were killed and un-estimated quantity of properties were destroyed (Jorre in Adamu, 2011) ^[11]. The civil war could be classified as an ethnic conflict the soldiers that fought on the Biafran side were mostly Igbos while those that fought in the opposition, that is, the Nigerian side, were drawn from other ethnic groups in the count Apart from the enormous human and physical damages that the war caused the nation, it brought to fore high level tribalism, ethnicity, mistrust, fear of domination and other related negative relationships among different ethnic groups in Nigeria. As Nwosu (2010) ^[13] noted, although the country had riot suffered any full scaled warfare since 1970, there has been a prevalence of localized yet bloody conflicts mainly propelled by ethnic or religious rivalries in

different parts of the country (Ekpiwre and Aliyu, 2014) ^[4]. In the North, the prevalence of ethno-religious conflicts comes to the fore notably with the Maitasine riots in Kano in 1981 and in Maiduguri and Jimeta in 1982. Other notable ones were the Bauchi conflicts that took place between 1985 and 1991; the Zango-Kataf and Hausa/Fulani crises in Kafanchan in 1998; the Jukun and Kuteb and the Jukun and Tiv conflicts of 1991, 1992 and 1993; as well as the Fulani and Mambila conflicts. Between 2009 and 2012, hundreds of people and properties worth millions of naira were lost due to the wanton destruction caused by the ethno-religious conflicts that engulfed the hitherto peaceful city of Jos. The South also had its own dose of ethno-religious crises. As noted by Adamu (2011) ^[1] there were sporadic intra-Yoruba clashes between the Ifes and Modekekes in Ile-Ife in 1995 and inter-ethnic conflict between the Yorubas and the Hausas in Alaba and Shagamu (in Lagos and Ogun states, respectively). The Niger Delta region also experienced series of ethnic conflicts, especially the prolonged tribal war between the Ubrobos and Itsekiris and between Itsekiris and Ijaws in 1991 and 1992. Another dimension to ethnic confrontation in Nigeria came to fore with the emergence of ethnic militias in some parts of the country. The agitation by ethnic militias such as Odin People Congress (OPC), Egbesu Boys of Africa, Bakasi boys, Choceco Movement, Movement for the Actualization for Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Ijaw youth Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) etc has not only become worrisome, but has become a threat to national security and integration in Nigeria. A careful study of the foregoing points to a key question, namely: is it possible for ethnic conflicts to be amicably resolved in Nigeria? This question is pertinent because, “for as long as people exist in different paradigms, circumstances, belief systems and cultures, there must be a clash of ideas which leads to misunderstandings... [and] if not properly managed could escalate into a full blown conflict situation” Ezenwosu (2011). Certainly, preventive measures can be put in place to stem the rising tide of ethnic conflicts. However, as suggested by Ezenwosu, one universally veritable tool that helps to achieve a conflict-free society is education. This is in agreement with the assertion by UNESCO (as cited in Adamu, 2005) that “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that peace must be constituted”. This statement succinctly depicts the importance of peace education in the socialization process. Moreover, since the school, particularly primary school, is a key agent of socialization; priority must be given to it when considering ways of resolving conflicts in society. It must be pointed out here that there is no subject called “peace education” at the primary or secondary schools levels. It is not a subject that stands alone on its own, but it has been adopted as an integral part of education at these formative levels. Peace concepts are to be transmitted through the regular school subjects. Any curriculum that is planned according to Offorma (2002) usually is designed to provide appropriate and valid education to the society.

Early peace education is vital in making individuals learn to suppress their instinctive nature of being violent. When taught at the primary school, peace education should:

- a. Entrench peace culture in the minds of learners.
- b. Encourage learners to promote peace wherever they are and in whatever they do.

- c. Expose learners to the horrors of violence, especially ethno-religious violence, thereby encouraging them to keep off from violence at all times.
- d. Encourage learners to live in peace with one another, not minding their religion, sex, class or ethnic background.
- e. Build in learners the capacity for peaceful negotiations and mediation in times of conflict (Oguegbune - Okwuemu, 2011).

Challenges of Ethnic Integration

In line with the objectives for education in national policy on education in Nigeria the schooling system in Nigeria through (i) the existence and operation of secondary schools, federal government colleges, federal universities, polytechnics and colleges of education as ‘unity schools’ (ii) national youth service corps scheme, and (iii) interstate student exchanges programmes; have continued to provide opportunities for Nigerian children and ‘youth from diverse backgrounds to come together, live and study together, trust and respect one another and also to think and act in concert on matters of national interest. Besides the use of English language as a lingua franca and its teaching and use in the schooling system nationwide continues to promote ease of communication and comprehension amongst the diverse people as to foster ethno-religious boundaries and promote sense of togetherness (Obasi and Osuale, 2014). The inclusion of curriculum of schools such topics as the reciting of the national anthem and the national pledge as well as civics lessons on patriotism and loyalty to ones country, obligations of citizens and seeing Nigerians as one family, are all intended the engender the spirit, of patriotism and nationalism and cement the bonds of unity among the citizenry. Despite the measures put in place by the federal government of Nigeria to promoted national integration, the country is still far from being integrated and united. Rather, Nigeria seems to be progressively inching towards disintegration due to the intensification of the country’s regional, ethnic and religious divisions occasioned by the struggle by political gladiators for the control of political power at the centre and the fear of domination and marginalization which has given rise to intrigues, political muscle flexing and resentment. The emerging challenges which impede the achievement of ethnic integration according to Obasi and Osuale are as follow. Firstly, although Nigeria fought a long and costly civil war (1967-1970) to top the secession of the Eastern region and keep Nigeria as one country and the 3-R programm was initiated, the Easterners, mainly the Ibos, after 44 years since the war ended still feel that the programme did not go far enough and are demanding for reparations. The Ibos also feel they continue to suffer political marginalization and isolation from the key political establishments in other parts of Nigeria who found themselves on the same side during the civil war who deny them not only opportunities to occupy strategic positions in the national institutions but also withhold the establishment of strategic federal projects in Ibo land due to the mistrust from the war. Hence, many disaffected Ibos still nurse the hope for their own country as evident in the founding and assertiveness of separatist movements like Movement for Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM). Secondly, sectional resentments within a national institution like the army is a major challenge to national

integration. The April 1990 military coup d'état by a group of Junior army officers led by Major Gideon Oskar, a Tiv man from the, middle belt of Nigeria, who based on the claims of acting on behalf of the "oppressed and enslaved people" of the Christian middle -belt and the South, excised some states in the North from the Federal Republic of Nigeria was largely informed by resentments occasioned by feelings of exclusion and domination in the central government that was controlled preponderantly by Northern Muslim military officers. The use of the expression "oppressed and enslaved people" is a clear indication of the extent to which the fear of domination has been, across the board, a major challenge for national integration in Nigeria. The third principal challenge to national integration is the General 'Ibrahim Babangida annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election won by Chief M.K.O. Abiola, a Yoruba man from South Western Nigeria. The Yoruba's felt that the annulment of the election which was considered the freest and fairest in Nigeria's electoral history was a calculated attempt by the North to prevent the Yoruba's from controlling political power at the centre and greeted the injustice with huge protests which was supported by many sympathizers worldwide. A major effect of the annulment is the inclination towards regionalism in the South West, where the people think that regional autonomy will afford them the chance to control their own affairs. The implementation of regionalism will imply a weak central government which could be a prelude to a non-violent disintegration of Nigeria. A fourth challenge is the perennial complaint by ethnic nationalities in the oil rich Niger Delta region over the land, water and air pollution in the area due to petroleum oil exploration and the clamour for a greater share of the oil revenues, if not outright resource control. The agitations which eventually culminated in militant actions like bombing oil installations, kidnapping foreign oil workers, in the region to disrupt oil production and export by Nigeria still persists much as the amnesty programme put in place in 2009 by President Umar Yar'Adua has led to the discontinuation of hostilities in the Niger delta by militant. "The fifth challenge arises from the issue of indigeneship and non-indigeneship in the various states of Nigeria where fellow countrymen that are Nigerian citizens who have settled, work and live in a state other than their own state or a state ethnically different from their own ethnic group are considered and treated differently as mere settlers. As mere settlers they are denied access to the rights and privileges enjoyed by the indigenous people /ethnic groups in the state in spite of the fact that such persons may have lived in such places for decades, married and raised their children in the state and are fluent in the local/indigenous language. Non indigenes suffer discrimination in access to economic, political, social and educational opportunities in the state they live and work in. Added to this discrimination is the recent demand by some state governments in the country that non indigenes should declare their status as non indigenes by registering with the state authorities as a way of checking security threats posed by Boko Haram insurgents. The sixth and possibly the most presently disturbing of all the challenges is the threat to national unity posed by extremist and fundamentalist Islamic religious groups especially in the Northern parts of the country seeking to establish their own Islamic country in Nigeria or wishing to Islamize the whole country such as the Boko Haram (western education is evil)

movement. Boko Haram continues to attack and bomb police and military establishments, churches, motor parks, mosques, markets, media houses, schools, public buildings and installations including telecommunication facilities. They also indiscriminately kill Nigerians and abduct school girls. The worst case scenario in Boko Haram spree of killings would be the targeted mass killings of Southern ethnic groups members (who are mostly Christians) living in the North. This, if it happens, could unleash massive reprisal killings in the South and retaliations in the North. Which could be followed by chains of reprisals that could snowball into an all out ethnic and religious war that could lead to the total disintegration of Nigeria. The seventh challenge arises from the tensions created in the Nigerian polity by some Northern politicians who desire to scuttle President Goodluck Jonathan's 2011-2015 tenure because they felt it negated the North's right to rule up 2015 notwithstanding President Umaru Yar' Adua's death in office and the Constitutional provision for the Vice President to continue with the mandate. Having failed in that respect are still bent on stopping President Jonathan's 2015 re-election bid to serve out the constitutionally provided two terms. Such politicians have even threatened that if power does not return back to the North in 2015, there will be trouble in the country. The South-South pro-Jonathan group and their southern supporters have equally threatened trouble in Nigeria if Jonathan does not get a second term to rule Nigeria. This not only divides the country along regional line but also heats up the polity to a boiling and explosion point.

Social Studies as panacea for ethnic integration in Nigeria

Social Studies being described as a veritable tool, helps to develop creativity, critical thinking, national consciousness, awareness, positive attitudes and values, proper management of resources, honesty, transparency, accountability, trustworthiness which is necessary ingredients for growth and stability. Social Studies according to Haruna and Liman (2013) ^[5] gives people knowledge, stability, skills and competencies for life long leaning to help them find new solutions to their environmental, economic and social issues (Rikoto, 2011) ^[17]. Social issues which include ethnic conflicts, terrorism, militarism, drugs and drugs related matters etc. In line with the objectives of Social Studies, stability of the nation through eradicating ethnic conflict, terrorism, militancy, violence and any other forms of conflicts can be achieved by making students and citizens realize their personal accomplishments and potential through the teachings of the right types of attitude and values of hard work, creativity, willingness to accept changes, social and economic awareness and critical judgment. This could help people from different ethnic groups to imbibe the culture of love, unity, peace and forgiveness. It is a common knowledge that in whatever society man lives, he must do at least two main things, these according to Haruna and Liman (2013) ^[5] are first, such an individual must interact with his fellow man and secondly, that individual must adapt himself to the environment and make himself fully useful. A country like Nigeria with almost four hundred ethnic groups with different languages and culture. The larger portion of this teeming population, consist of youth in their early adolescent stage. This means that the greater percentage of Nigerians is constituted by social energies that are yet to attain that level of focus and

awareness to pay loyalty to the central unit rather than tribal, ethnic or religious groups. Therefore, the need for this group to freely interact with one another and to consciously adapt to the larger environment can be fully useful to Nigeria is of paramount importance. The fundamental way of achieving this very important need is to inculcate national consciousness into Nigerian youth through the system of instruction in our school, which can only be done through the teaching of social studies. As a tool, Social Studies encourages students to imbibe skills of observation, open mindedness, objectivity and capability to suggest solutions to problems according to the needs of their environment. It assist learners understand the limitation of looking at issues as fragments, rather than a whole as they unfold in the society, that is why Social Studies is a continuous and progressive educational enterprise that is beneficial to Nigeria for ethnic integration and progress as a whole. Since ethnic conflict and other social vices are social issues and the social problems are shared and learned, therefore Social Studies as the study of different social sciences, when properly implemented, it will teach the learners in the school the behaviours that can easily change them from undesirable to desirable, wrong to right, bad to good and as such not only leave in peace, unity and harmony but also make sure that peace, unity and progress are being imbibed among the ethnic groups, Social Studies curriculums according to Haruna and Liman in Adediran (2017) [2] are also very vital in teaching integration usually and truthfulness, which when inculcated into the mind of young Nigerians the issues of ethnic conflict and other social vices could be a story. Social Studies as interdisciplinary studies not only inculcate in the learners the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions but also inculcated those values that are considered essential in human relationship in the society. To ensure it all, Social Studies plays important roles in bringing the various ethnic groups together as one indivisible nation called Nigeria, through the following according to Harrna and Liman (2013) [5] these includes;

- a. Teaching the knowledge, skills, attitude and actions that will help learners to become useful to them and their society.
- b. Inculcating right types of values that modern society need.
- c. Teaching the youth, the ultimate goals of creativity, cooperation, tolerance, hardworking and respect for the constituted authorities.
- d. Promotion of national patriotism, consciousness and unity as well as having sense of belonging to the only one country.

Conclusion

Having discussed the role Social Studies can play to integrate ethnic groups in Nigeria, the paper itemized some problems that can serve as impediment to the proper, integration of various ethnic groups in Nigeria. The paper also discussed some of the ethnic groups in Nigeria and the conflict, That had ravaged among them in the time past. Some of them which the paper opined are many series of internal problems, such as conflict ranging from religions, political, economic, ethnic violence as well as land dispute as the main threat to ethnic integration to strengthen country security, peace, unity and harmony which can be achieved through Social Studies. It is rather unfortunate that efforts towards building strong national unity, national security and ethnic integration are being jeopardized by extreme cultural

Ethnicity, religious and economic sentiment and bad leaderships. The learning experience expected to build the desirable, attitudes for national commissioners; peace, tolerance and unity among Nigerians are contained in the social studies curriculum taught in schools. There is need however to use Social Studies as a means to integrate various ethnic groups devoid of sentiment, differences as well disunity among Nigerian.

Recommendations

Arising from the foregoing discussion, the following recommendations are therefore suggested in order to use as panacea to ethnic integration in Nigeria.

1. Educational institutions in Nigeria in which Social Studies is taught as a subject should have major rule to play with regard to the improvement of the contents instruction delivery in this very important subject area for the promotion of security, peace, unity and development as well as inclusion of violence resolution strategies into the Social Studies curriculum of the school.
2. Social Studies curriculum in Nigerian schools should be strictly followed and implemented so as to inculcate in the people love, peace, unity and harmony among the citizens and some of our societal norms and values that are geared toward teaching peace tolerance and forgiveness should be included into the curriculum of social studies in secondary schools.
3. Concept of culture of peace, religion and religious tolerance, marriage and inter-tribal marriage, which are vital aspects of social studies should be well taught at the JSS level of schooling, learners at this level of upper basic education programme in Nigeria are mostly adolescent who are always agents of any terrorism, sentiment, violence and other social vices in Nigeria.
4. The content area of Social Studies in Nigeria drawn from relevant areas in arts and social science subjects should be reviewed to make it more sharpened so as to serve as bedrock in dealing with the central issues of insecurity.

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