

**SOCIAL STUDIES AND THE PROMOTION OF CULTURAL VALUES AND  
POLITICAL STABILITY IN NIGERIA**

**By**

**JIMOH, Kayode Ibrahim**

*Department of Social Studies*

*Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, Nigeria*

**Being a Paper Presented at 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of SOSAN**

**Date: 26th to 28th November, 2013**

**Venue: Hall 2, Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin**

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper attempts to examine different cultures in Nigeria which tend to produce various values that negate the principle of national unity. The effect of the essence of shared or common values is reflected in the political process where there is evidence of violence, rigging of elections, dishonesty and corruption in order to secure power. These practices sometimes precipitate political instability. The paper recognizes the great potentials of Social Studies Education in ameliorating the situation, it recommends new methods for teaching Social Studies and the complementary role of government(s) in teaching some of the ills that plague the society.

## **Introduction**

As a plural society, many forces tend to pull Nigeria state. Nigeria's plurality can be seen in terms of the various ethnic groups, cultures, religions and languages. Many Nigerians would first and foremost identify themselves with their ethnic groups before the nation. It is in this way that they enter the Nigerian political arena in order to control the machinery government. In their attempt to control the government at various levels, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic sentiments were often involved. These make them to disobey the rules of the game thereby fuelling instability in the policy.

The responsibility of any good government is to promote good cultural values. In the pre-colonial period, various Nigerian groups bequeath worthwhile cultural values to their societies. This is evidenced in the stable political order they maintained. In the present Nigerian situation, it appears that the cultural values transmitted in the society is the culture of violence, rigging of elections, corruption, immorality, dishonesty, conflicts, drug abuse etc. These are certainly not worthwhile values that can move any nation forward.

There is political instability in Nigeria as can be seen in the nature of successive elections, religious crises in the north, ethnic crises here and there, the crisis in the Niger Delta, the crises of marginalization by some ethnic nationalities, to mention but a few. This does not help any nation to make definite progress. Formal and non-formal educational measures have been put in place to remedy this problem.

Social Studies Education was conceived as a subject to help to heal the wounds of civil war, ethnicity, and to promote national unity, cooperation, good citizenship etc. using the instrumentality of the school. Social Studies Education played a proper role in inculcating cultural values in Nigerian children. Is the subject taught in the schools in such a way as to fulfill the goals? This paper explores the cultural, social and political problems in Nigeria and maintains that Social Studies Education, if well handled in the schools will help in the promotion of cultural values and political stability in Nigeria.

## **The Concept of Culture and Cultural Values**

Otite and Ogionwo (1979) defined culture as "the complex whole of man's acquisition of knowledge, moral, belief, art, custom, technology, which are transmitted from generation to generation. Similarly, UNESCO (2000) defined it as:

The set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

According to Ogunbameru (2006), culture s derived from three elements: values, norms and artifacts. Values are ideas about what is important in life. They guide the result of culture. Norms are expectations of how people will behave in different situations. Each culture has different methods ailed sanctions for enforcing its norms. Sanctions vary with the importance of the norm; norms that a society enforces formally are called laws. Artifacts are materially observable things used by the people. They are derived from people's values and norms.

According to Nwuzor (2002), cultural values are those worthwhile and acceptable aspects of non-material of a people which help in moulding the character of the people. Cultural values are the bedrock of the society. The values held in the society help shape the behaviour of the people. These values, because they are good are transmitted from generation to generation. For instance, in Muslim dominated area of Nigeria, especially Northern Nigeria, it is part of political values to respect political authority due to the centralized political structure of the Sokoto Caliphate on the one hand, and the influence of Islamic culture on the other hand. In the same vein, in Western Nigeria, traditional political authorities are highly revered in keeping with the Yoruba values of obedience and respect to the Oba and elders. However, as Afigbo (1972) revealed, the republican nature of the stateless societies as enshrined in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria seem to promote the values of individualism.

In Nigeria, individual is prepared and enjoined from childhood to adopt the way of life of his native culture and ethnic group. This starts with the traditional naming ceremony which usually precedes the religious naming ceremony. According to Ofuebe (2001), the individual is unwittingly being inducted into the group society. This kind of ceremony continues all through the adolescent life. Other ceremonies that the child might pass through include circumcision, induction into the communal work group at about five years, induction into masquerade and a host of other socialization activities.

At these formative years, the child is unconsciously being equipped for citizenship role in a free secular and detribalized Nigeria where he is going to spend most of his productive life interacting with others. It is at this point that the problem of the socialization begins. This is because the person is now an adult and may find it difficult to shed his stereotype and prejudices.

### **Political Stability in Nigeria**

Political stability has eluded Nigeria since her independence fifty-two years ago. Political stability according to Obasi (2005) is "the dynamic study and steady development of the government and the society without undue disruption of the processes of the government". Such disruptions could be caused by military interventions, ethnic conflicts, or even terrorism. The developed countries of the world such as the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Canada, to mention but a few, have enjoyed relative political stability. In these countries government mechanisms for addressing grievances have

---

developed over years to such an extent that no misunderstanding or conflict disrupts the normal functions of government.

Share (1989) sees political stability as the normal functioning of government with all the arms performing their duties without major event impeding their functions. In countries, where there is political stability the rule of law and democracy is well entrenched. This ensures fair and equitable treatment of aggrieved persons. In this direction political stability is predicated on the assumption that there is internal harmony between the different strata of society. Political stability does not necessarily mean the absence of conflict but that there are institutions for managing those conflicts to the extent that it does not dislocate the functioning of the government.

### **Political Instability in Nigeria and Its Consequences**

Political instability is here used to describe the various political problems and upheavals which the Nigerian political system experiences from time to time. Some of these are threat to secession, the secession attempts by Biafra, military coup de tats, bungled censuses, rigged elections that precipitate crises, crisis in the Niger Delta, power sharing, marginalization, insecurity. These problems have seriously disrupted in various ways the normal functioning of government. For instance, the way the 1965 regional elections were rigged in the then Western Region led to violence which culminated to the first military coup in Nigeria on January 15, 1966. Anifowose (1982) opined that: "had the authorities at the Federal and regional levels respected the verdict of the votes, the January 1966 coup could have been averted". The consequence of the coup was the insurgency of the military rule in Nigeria. Military rule led to the suspension of the legislature at the regional and national levels. Democracy and the rule of law became the victims but Nigerians became the losers.

Nigeria was plunged into thirty months civil war mainly due to the absence of institutionalized conflict management mechanisms especially under military rule. Amoda (1972) opined that there were no institutionalized structures where aggrieved northerners could express their anger after the introduction of the May 24, 1966 unification Decree which abolished the federal system in Nigeria. In the same vein, mechanisms to pacify Ibo was lacking following the chaotic situation in Northern Nigeria in which many Igbo people were killed. The aftermath of this was the civil war which dislocated government and disrupted economic activities.

### **The Role of Social Studies in Inculcating Right Cultural and Political Values**

One may wish to ask if Social Studies Education has the capacity of inculcating cultural values and political values in pupils and students. If the answer is yes, the next question could be, has the subject discussed that in Nigeria? The goals of Social Studies took root from the National Policy on Education (2004) namely:

- i. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- ii. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- iii. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- iv. The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipments for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society.

It was based on the above goals that the philosophy of Social Studies was derived as Okobia (1984). Ezegbe (1988) and Mezibobi (1992) reported respectively which now served as the cornerstone. The overall aim of Social Studies Education is to make children become patriotic, socially responsible and good citizens by understanding the social milieu they are operating from. Some values that Social Studies Education needs to inculcate in children according to Orakwue (2000), includes an appreciation of the diversity of Nigerian positive attitude for citizenship, entrepreneurship, positive thinking, cooperation and honesty. Similarly, Ahaezi (1991) observed that the essence of Social Studies Education is to inculcate core societal values in children. The principal task is to make the child understand his or her society and relate the core values of the society to the Social Studies lesson. The subject appears to have the capacity of inculcating cultural values, political values and political stability.

Despite the potential values of Social Studies Education in inculcating cultural values and political stability in Nigeria, it appears that more efforts need to be applied. Orakwue (2000), Nwuzor (2002) and Okafor (2005) all made allusions to the fall in social values on Nigeria. Corruption is the order of the day. Armed robbery is rampant while examination malpractice has become a national cankerworm. It is therefore a big challenge to Social Studies Education and Social Studies teachers to stem the tide. It is under the purview of Social Studies education to impart effective learning which seems tube the bane of Nigeria. The first two national goals in the National Policy in Education are the immediate concern of Social Studies Education. Orakwue (2000) is of the view that Social Studies teachers must keep abreast with new development in the society. According to him, the internet facilities, satellite, televisions, home videos etc. are negatively influencing children. These influences are bringing new values that are destroying the society. The Social Studies teachers must recognize this and develop new teaching strategies to reduce the negative effects.

Social Studies, as an inter-disciplinary curriculum, attempts to unify knowledge from the various disciplines of the society in dealing with the problems prevailing in the society (NERC1980). Social Studies, if properly taught, can be used as a tool for political awareness and good for creating good citizenry in children. In other words, Social Studies should be used as a vehicle for teaching democratic values. It has been noticed that Social Studies in Nigeria is aimed at organizing the pupils, students and young learners for the purpose of helping them to cultivate an awareness and understanding that would transform the learners into citizens, with skills, attitudes,competences and reason, judgement enable them to contribute to the political, social and development of Nigerian society (Otobia, 1983). Therefore, one can notice that Social Studies can be used as a vehicle for teaching cultural values to the students. Social Studies analyses men in all ramifications. Hence, the multi-disciplinary approach takes cognizance of the socio-economic, political, religious, cultural, physical, scientific and technological aspects of life. This broadens the horizon of the people and makes them operate beyond parochial levels of ethnicity and sectionalism. It also makes students to be tolerant and respectful to the views of others. This disposition is necessary for the enhancement of nation-building. Value education is a crucial aspect of Social Studies. The teaching of positive values serves as an instrument for bringing about desirable positive change in Nigeria citizens. According to Okike (1993).

---

The functional prerequisite which constitutes the bedrock upon which members of the society depend for their survival and identity, manifest themselves in the people's value orientation and social attitude expressed through services rendered to one another in extended family relations, economic, political, religious, non-formal education and in their social life.

Values as a state of the mind refer to as patterns of behaviour. They determine action, shaping influencing and directing the line of action which an individual exhibits in a given situation. Political values, according to Ezegebe (1993). are those which determine the activities, decisions, or behaviour of a person, political activists, government and institution on the basis of political consideration.

Through value-clarification, the teacher in the course of Social Studies Education, guides the students to develop personal values that will be meaningful to the child and the society with value education, pragmatic values through popular moral codes, condemns the kinds of action which threaten to undermine the unity of a group. Such are negative attitudes like dishonesty, incest, indiscipline, or violence against fellow members and other deviant behaviours. When these vices are eradicated through Social Studies, problems facing a nation, obstacles of nation-building can be removed.

The points raised by Meziobi (1992) are however, worth noting here:

For the most disturbing factor in Nigeria underdevelopment is Nigerians themselves who are bereft of positive value and attitudes to effect national development.

Social Studies Education helps to produce effective citizens who have basic requirements for nation-building. Therefore, democratic values can be taught in Nigerian schools. The teaching makes it an asset to nation building. It eliminates subjectivity ethnic prejudice, disunity, and enables individuals function effectively as they perform their civic responsibilities to the society. The emphasis on the affective domain in Social Studies Education encourages a feeling of sympathy and patriotism in individual thereby enabling them to ask question on how and why or express their feeling and opinion on certain issues. They are put in position to offer solution where things are wrong.

### **Conclusion**

A vast and diverse country like Nigeria needs to promote cultural values and political stability. This is because there are centrifugal forces always trying to pulling the nation. The unity of the country must be anchored by exerting efforts towards reducing cultural differences between the ethnic groups. One sure way of realizing this is through Social Studies Education. To this end, the environment for the teaching of Social Studies must be conducive because of its positive changes that the subject can make in the minds of students.

### **Recommendations**

It is hereby recommended that Social Studies should be used to attract children from primary school to be trained to want to live in any part of the country. This opportunity implies that the child should be made to understand the country's diversity. Secondly, Social Studies should focus on the teachings of means of tackling some of the social vices in Nigeria. This can be done through the teaching of the topics like unity in diversity, nationalism, solutions to social problems in Social Studies. It should preach the realization of national objectives because it is inseparable from political stability. Thirdly, trained and

certificated teachers should be employed in our schools to teach Social Studies to ensure effective participation to the contribution of the nation-building. Finally, instructional objectives in Social Studies lessons should emphasize the teachings on how to relate with other people in any circumstance they find themselves.

### **References**

- Afigbo, A.E. (1972), *The Warrant Chiefs in Southeastern Nigeria*: Macmillan.
- Alaezi, O. (1991), "Concepts and Contents of Social Studies in the Nigerian New Junior Secondary Schools" in Ikwumelu, S.N. and Mezie Obi, K. (eds.) *Aspects of Social Studies for Higher Education (Theoretical Approach)* Onitsha. Outright Publishers.
- Amoda, M. (1972), "Background to the Conflict: Summary of Nigeria's Political History from 1914 to 1964" in Okpadu J. (ed.) *Nigeria: Dilemma of Nationhood (An African Analysis of the Biafran Conflict)*. New York. Nok Publishers Ltd.
- Anifowo, R. (1982) *Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience*, New York: Nok Publishers Ltd.
- Ezegbe, M.O. (1988), *Fundamentals of Social Studies*, Umuahia: Danton Publishers. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), *National Policy on Education*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Kalu. Victor (1995), *The Leadership Question: Power and Poverty in Nigeria*. Enugu: Hillys Press Ltd.
- Mezieobi. K.A. (1992). *Themes in Social Studies Education*. Enugu: Styline Publishers. Nwobedi. R.C. (2004) *Revenue Allocation and Resource Control in Nigeria Federation*, Enugu: Hilly Publishers. Nwuzor, A. (2002), *Education for Democracy in Nigeria*. Awka: Futuretek Publishers. Obasi, I. (2005), *Politics and Globe Dictionary*. Aba Eagle Publishers.
- Obi. R. (2006). "Socialization and Internationalization". In Ogunbameru, K.A. and Rotimi. R. (eds.) *Man and His Social Environment: A Textbook of Sociology*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Ofuebe, C. (2001), "The Individual and Conflict in Society" in Ofuebe, C. (ed.) *Dynamics of Social Studies*, Mgbovvo: New Generation Books.
- Okafor, U. (2005) "Value Reorientation in Nigeria" in *Journal for the Advancement of Knowledge*, Vol.
- Ogban-Iyarn. Y. (2005), "Social Production and Reproduction, Social Conflicts and the Challenges of Democracy in Nigeria" in *University of Nigeria Journal of Political Economy Vol. 1*.
- Ogunbameru. K.A. (2006) 'Culture - the Fabric of Human Society\*' in Ogunbameru, K.A. and Rotimi, W.R. (eds.) *Man and His Social Environment. A Textbook of Sociology*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Okobia, O.S. (1984). *A Guide to the National Curriculum in Social Studies for the Nigerian Junior Secondary Schools*. Nsukka: SOSAN.
- Olatunde, W. (1999), "An Assessment of the Impact of June 12, 1993 Annulment on Nigeria" in *Journal of Inter-disciplinary Studies*, Vol. 1.
- Orakwue, I.T.C. (2000) *Social Studies (Education Basics) for Tertiary institutions*. Onitsha: Desari Publishers.
- Otite, O. & Ogidniro, W. (1979), *An introduction to Sociological Studies*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Udenya, N. (2005), *Teaching Social Studies in Secondary Schools in Enugu State: The Problems*". In Inueze. A. (ed.) *Issues on Teaching Social Studies in the Junior Secondary*

---

Schools. *Enugu World Publishers. UNESCO (2002) [htm://www UNESCO/org /education2002univemaldeclashtrn 1](http://www.UNESCO.org/education2002/univemaldeclashtrn1).*

Sheers, W. (1999). *Political Development. New York: Nok Publishers.*

Young, C. (1979), *The Policies of Cultural Pluralism, Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press Ltd.*