

**PROMOTING UNITY IN DIVERSITY IN NIGERIA THROUGH  
SOCIAL STUDIES IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL UNITY**

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**Abstract**

*One of the unique characteristics of Nigeria as a multi-ethnic nation is the diversities pervading the country. These diversities manifests in form of social, cultural, religious, political, language, economic as well as historical and geographical differences. Such differences are like double- edged sword in terms of national unity in Nigeria since most conflicts and crises rocking the nation are guided by such factors. Social Studies as a school subject is a unique subject that seeks after a unified nation. This paper therefore examines how Social Studies can assist in promoting unity in diversity in Nigeria by taking a retrospective approach to national unity in Nigeria.*

**Introduction**

Though the statement, the unending questions of national unity in Nigeria, in whose interest? may sound rhetorical but it is a truism in the case of the entity called Nigeria even in its pre-independence era to the present time. Questions keep on raging on when it comes to the issues of national unity in Nigeria. The following excerpts from Olayiwola (2012) are but some of the recurring questions and issues in Nigeria:

*But for how long shall we continue to bury our brothers and sisters as a result of devilish conducts of Boko Haram in the North? What about the recent exodus of the Igbos from the North to the South as a result of hostility meted out to them by the rampaging Boko Haram sect? For how long is the nation going to accommodate the threat and intimidation of the various military groups in the Niger Delta area? How is the nation prepared to neutralize the Odua People Congress, OPC in the South-West? What is the solution to the political imbalance in the country? (p. 67).*

Similarly, Onabanjo (2012) put forward some seemingly national questions as follows: 'but why would Achebe rake up the past in the manner he did; to draw attention to himself after a long lull and make more money; to denigrate the greatness of Awolowo and reduce him to a mere dot in Nigeria history; to rouse the Igbos against their brothers in the South- West and make the latter unworthy of any trust or simply to fight the Yoruba back for helping to fight the war of unity?

The foregoing questions are but indications of a disunited and suspicion-filled nation. Yet, according to Ladigbolu (2012), 'things are no longer at ease in Nigeria, indeed things are falling apart and it is clear that the beautiful ones are truly not yet born, no doubt the arrow of God has been unleashed on our nation, but the truth is, the gods are not to be blamed for our woes'. The implication of this analysis is the fact that Nigerians are responsible for the state of disunity in the nation and would therefore be responsible for fixing the seemingly loose ends together, this cannot be done in a vacuum but through unrelenting efforts of citizens.

It is in the light of the foregoing that Social Studies experts and Social Studies as a core- subject in the current Universal Basic Education in Nigeria must rise up to the challenges of national unity in Nigeria. More so, Education has been

described as instrument par excellence for achieving national objectives (FGN, 2004). This

perhaps underscored the assertion of Akinkuotu (2012) that the quality of education will go a long way in shaping the nation, individual and collective future in Nigeria. Hence, education constitutes an imperishable asset for the country. Thus, this paper examines ways by which Social Studies as a school subject could be utilized in promoting unity in diversity and by extension, national unity in Nigeria. This, it is hoped will find recourse to the seemingly unending questions pervading the nation's unity.

### **National Unity in Nigeria in Retrospect**

The fact that Nigeria has been perching on illusion called unity is not an overstatement right from the colonial era to the post-colonial era, the country has been grappling with the problem of putting the nation together. Attesting to this, Ajiboye (2011) while appraising 50 years of Nigeria's independence affirmed that at birth, Nigeria was imbued with certain structural imbalances such as the aftermath of the 1964 post elections saga and the consequent military take-over through the first coup-d'état of 1966 down to the numerous communal conflicts, militancy in the Niger-Delta coupled with religious riots in the present time.

As part of issues affecting national unity in Nigeria, Mofoluwawo (2012) cited a number of ethnic violence that have engulfed the nation to include the Ife-Modakeke feud, expatriates- militant youths in the Niger-Delta region; Nupe-Yoruba conflict in Kwara state; Junkun- Tiv conflicts, Zangokataf conflicts in Kaduna state. Yoruba-Hausa in Sagamu, Kano Riots of 1966, 1982 and 1997. Yoruba-Hausa in Sagamu, Jos riots and the on-going Boko Haram saga. These incidences are further proof of disunity in the country. In like manner, peace has

become an elusive substance in Nigeria baring efforts by successive government to engender peace and tranquility in the country. The country presently is grouped among countries of the world with relatively low peace. Corroborating this view, Mordi (2012) quoting the institute of Economics and Peace, an International Research Institute responsible for measuring global peace indicated that in the 2012 Global Peace Index, Nigeria ranked 146th among 153 countries. Nigeria also belonged to the 32 countries marked with red. The reason for this cannot be far-fetched, the spate of disunity in the country has resulted into loss of lives and property. Little wonder the comments of John Shagaya, former senator from Plateau state that he shared in the shame of Plateau for three reason having served his country and other parts of Africa all his life, there is no peace in Plateau state, his home.

Skirmishes of disunity are even being felt in the issues which ordinarily supposed to act as unifying factors in Nigeria. Many are the conflicts and crises that have political undertone. Confirming this situation, Adesua (2012) recounted deaths of a number of youth corps members who died in active service while answering the clarion calls to serve their fathers land. This took place in what he described as politically motivated conflict with religious colorations, the height of man's inhumanity to man.

The spate of disunity in the country is generating a number of issues. The height of this is the call for a Sovereign National Conference. Convocation of such conference becomes necessary considering the social, economic, religion and political brouhaha rocking the country (Olayiwola, 2012). Thus, it is expected that such a conference will re-determine the unity, peace as well as confirmed peaceful co-existence of the various ethnic components of the country. The re-definition of

the nations' unity, peace and co- existence is an indication that the country is in a disarray unity wise.

It will amount to disservice here if mention is not made of the factors responsible for the situation of the country in items of national unity. It need be emphasized that the many questions agitating the mind of citizens of the country itself have degenerated in many cases to disunity. For instance, Ajayi (2012) identified among other factors influencing crises and disunity in the country to include return to democracy and upsurge of ethnic militias, ethnic violence, and lack of employment opportunity for youths, north-south dichotomy and associated difference religious impasses, injustice as well as corruption. The foregoing tends to affect the nation's unity generally. The foundation upon which the country was built is another contributory factor to its state of unity. Corroborating this, Ekanola in Oladiti and Gbadamosi (2012) observed that by the time Nigeria won her independence from Britain in 1960, its artificial origin coupled with other factors had bequeathed it a number of fundamental problems. One of such problems is the challenge of integrating the diverse nations hurriedly brought together by the said unholy wedlock into a cohesive socio-political whole.

Relating to the foregoing factors is the issues of plurality characterizing Nigerian nation coupled with the events pervading the country since its amalgamation in 1914. Attesting to this, Olu Adeyemi (2006) adduced that:

*The mere existence of different ethnic groups or diverse political world view in one society does not automatically produce tension or conflict, people with different ethnic and political leanings can and do co-exist without tension but this may change in times of stress or in situations of mutual disruptions (p.6).*

The plurality of the country has resulted in friction, stress and conflict in many situations. The avalanche of natural resources distributed unevenly across the country is yet another factor responsible for the spate of disunity in the country. For instance, Ekpo (2012) indicated that there has been renewed call to re-examine the nation's revenue-sharing formula in the nation's fiscal federalism. While the coalition of Northern leaders are calling for a reduction or withdrawal of 13 per cent derivation principle on oil revenue allocation to oil-production state, some South- South leaders are advocating for a 50 per cent upward review of the revenue allocation formula in favour of derivation. The implications of such divergent opinion are rivalry and disunity among the said regions. One other factor that is affecting national unity in Nigeria is the issues of nationalism and patriotism among the citizens. Many citizens holds in high esteem parochial loyalties to their ethnic affinity than the central, such ethnic and region penchants tends to preclude citizens loyalty to the region as a whole. Corroborating this view, Gbadebo (2012) asserted that there is conspicuous absence of true nationalistic and patriotic spirit in the citizen which has for long deprived the country from actualizing her national goals. Among such goals is the attainment of national unity.

Be that as it may, the spate of disunity in the country is having grave consequences on the nation at large manifesting in all forms of politically motivated conflicts with religious and ethnic colorations. To this, Raji (2012) alluded that the persistent ethnic chauvinism exhibited by various regimes in Nigeria have grave effects on the psyche of the various ethnic nationalities to an extent that those groups that even benefited now lay claim to marginalization at even attempt to reverse the status quo. Thus, the cause of plethora of violent

conflicts at virtually all regions in the country, are the leading to crises of ethnic nationalism and call for national conference.

Furthermore, the problem confronting national unity in Nigeria is having its tolls on both lives and property of citizens generally. Recounting the violent incidences in Plateau and activities of Boko Haram, Akinkuotu (2012) affirmed that the seed of crises sown in Jos as well as the failure to address its root cause in spite of several official efforts has turned the state to killing field where anarchy is reigning supreme. Confirming this stance, Sale Bayeri, the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeder Association in Plateau state stated that the violence that has engulfed the state for nearly a decade has claimed over 150 families of Fulani herdsmen while victims have lost property worth over #3 billion. Records of such dead and losses have been documented as part of the Niki Tobi Judicial Commission of Inquiry.

Similarly, the effects of disunity in the country can be seen in figures as it obtained in the Northern parts of the country since year 2004 as follows:

**List of Massacres that have occurred in Northern Nigeria between 2004 and 2012**

NAME	DATE	LOCATION	DEATHS	REMARK
Jos massacre	February 12, 2004	Jos	46	46 people killed in the attack
Yelwa Massacre	May 2, 2004	Jos	630	---
2010 Jos Massacre 2010	2010	Jos	992	Religious rioting; victims were mostly Christians killed by Muslims
2011 Abuja United Nations bombing	August 26,2011	Abuja	21	73 injured, Boko Haram attacked a United nations Compound
2011 Damaturu	November 4, 2011	Damaturu	100-150	Islamic militants associated with Boko Haram attacked

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				police stations, churches attacks and banks
December 2011 Nigeria Clashes	December 22-23, 2011	Maiduguri and Damaturu	68+	Islamic militants associated with Boko Haram clashed with security force
December 2011 Nigeria bombings	December 25, 2011	Madalla	45	73 Injured; Muslim militants bombed a catholic church during Christmas mass
January 5-6, 2012 Nigeria attacks	January 5-6, 2012	Mubi, Yola, Gombe, and Maidiguri	37+	Islamic terrorists attacked Churches and Christian Businesses; Boko Haram claimed responsibility
January 20, 2012 Nigeria attacks	January 20, 2012	Kano	185	Islamic terrorists attacked Churches and Christian Businesses; Boko Haram claimed responsibility
April 2012 Kaduna Massacre	April 8, 2012	Kaduna	38	Islamic terrorist bombed a church on Easter
June 2012 Kaduna church bombing	June 17, 2012	Kaduna, Wusasa and Sabon Gari	12-19	80 injured; Islamic terrorists bombed three churches
Matse Village, Massacre	July 08, 2012	Matse Village, Jos	52	Gunmen Suspected to be Fulanis killed a senator, representing Platues North, Dr. Gyang House of Assembly and the majority Leader representing Barkin Ladi Gynay Fulani and 50 others
Barkin Ladi & Riyom L.G Areas attack	July 07, 2012	Barkin Ladi and Riyom, Jos.	37	Dozens of people died in villages attacked by gunmen whose identities were yet to be clearly ascertained.

*Source: Tell July, 23, 2012 p. 25*



If the assertion of the Malaysian Department of National Unity on the concept of national unity as a situation in which all citizens from the various ethnic groups religions and states live in peace as one united nationality, giving full commitment to national identity based upon the federal constitutions is anything to go by, then the foregoing analysis is inimical to national unity.

### **Social Studies and Promotion of Unity in Diversity in Nigeria**

As earlier indicated, the place of education in nation's growth and development cannot be over-emphasized. As such, education tends to provide essential light in the dark alley of a nation's development is the ability of the citizens to come together to operate as a single whole. Attesting to this, Ajiboye (2010) quoting Akinlaye, Mansaray and Ajiboye affirmed that education is a potent instrument for reducing complexity confronting human beings.

Thus, Social Studies constitute one of the school subjects capable of achieving national objectives and by extension, objectives of education in Nigeria (Ajitoni, 2008). This is the more reason why Ajiboye (2009) adduced that Social Studies stands and as one of the school subjects that could help human beings to achieve the nations educational aspirations. Moreso, it has been argued that one of the crucial objectives of Nigeria's educational system is to train students to become good, productive and efficient citizens useful to themselves and the society (Gbadebo, 2012).

Descriptions given to the subject, Social Studies further strengthen the alliance between it and education. For instance, Awe in Oladiti and Ajogbeje (2008) described Social Studies as a problem -solving discipline which if properly programmed and effectively taught, would help in solving social problems bedeviling developing countries like Nigeria. To Ogundare (2001), Social Studies

is a study of survival in an organized curriculum as well as the process of finding solutions to such problems. Social Studies according to Dubey, Onyabe and Prokupek (1980) is a process of education which utilizes the study of human life for the purpose of giving children the crucial importance for the individual and the society.

Again, describing the potency of the subject, Social Studies bringing about desired change in individuals and society, Ajiboye (2009) described it as a school subject that is out to direct and give learners a free hand and opportunity to make enquires, investigate, discover, discuss experiment and acquire experiences in order to make decision on social issues and problems and find solutions to them. By implication, Social Studies as a school subject is capable of making learners participate in finding solution to a number of problems militating against the nationhood, prominent among which is the issue of national unity.

The efficacy of the subject in finding recourse to the problem of national unity is imbued in its objectives. For instance Adaralegbe in Gbadebo (2012) listed general objectives of teaching Social Studies in Nigeria to include: development of individual towards total adjustment within the society; development of sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and interdependence of all members of the local community and the wider national and international community; development of sense of responsibility, patriotism and effective citizenship as well as development of both intellectual and manipulative skills as well as positive attitudes and values such as honesty, dignity of labour, co-operation, justice, unity and love for the development of the nation and individual.

Another important aspect of Social Studies fostering national unity can be seen in its curriculum content. For instance, in the 9year Basic Education programme, the curriculum content of Social Studies both the lower, middle and

upper basics have a number of topics devoted to issues on national unity. For example, in JS1, theme six is devoted to national unity and integration with such sub- themes as meaning of national unity and integration in Nigeria, importance of national unity and integration. For JS II, theme devoted to peace and conflicts which are composite of national unity. The breakdown include meaning of peace and conflict; importance of living in peace with one another, ways of promoting peace; types of conflicts causes and consequences of conflicts, non-violent methods of resolving conflicts.

Similarly, theme five focused on international cooperation with sub-headings like meaning of international cooperation, efforts at achieving international cooperation, need for international understanding, consequence of international cooperation (NERDC, 2007). The foregoing contents of Social Studies are to equip learners with necessary pre-requisites for unity and harmonious relationship in the country. Equally of importance is the approach to the teaching of Social Studies which is based on principles of integration. Thus, the subject promote reflective enquiry on the part of the learners and by this, evolve means of resolving issues amicably before degenerating into conflicts and crises, by-product of which is disunity. Corroborating this view, Ajitoni (2008) identified among other uniqueness of Social Studies in the comity of other school subjects, its methodology.

Civic contents of nationalism and patriotism also goes a long way in the promotion of national unity generally. These contents constitute part of emphasis of Social Studies such as respect for the Worth and dignity of each person, civility, integrity, self discipline, tolerance, compassion and patriotism. Buttressing this fact, Akinola (2008) posited that no nation can hope to be developed without the individual and collective sense of hard work, honesty and self discipline. The

teaching of concepts such as religion, ethnicity cooperation, tolerance, group living, cooperation in Social Studies also helps in building the nation in terms of unity. National symbols and identity are pronounced in the teaching of Social Studies which tends to equip learners with ideals of unity and oneness of the count at large.

### **Conclusion**

As long as Nigeria remains a multi- ethnic nation, the issues of its unity will continue to generation questions. When necessary answers could not be provided for such, frictions, crisis and violence will continue unabated. In the event of such situation, national unity remains a mirage. To avoid such situation and its consequences, education must be devoted to finding recourse. Among others, Social Studies as a school subject possess all it takes to tackle such problem. Consequently, the ideals of Social Studies right from its concept, curriculum content, methodology and approaches must be promoted to foster unity among the learners from where such will be relayed to the society and the nation at large. Efforts must therefore be made in the realization of the objectives of Social Studies while necessary resources from human to materials must be provided.

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