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ROLE OF SOCIAL STUDIES IN NATION BUILDING  
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract**

*Social Studies is a way of living. It is the study of human interaction with the environment, it is concerned on how man live, influences and is in turn influenced by the environment. This paper focuses on the role of Social Studies in the development and sustenance of nation-building. The paper is divided into conceptualization; meaning of development, concepts of Nation building for sustainable development, and the role of Social Studies for sustainable nation building and recommendation were suggested. This is because Social Studies bring about positive change in the society in the area of skills, attitude, values, culture, economic and political development*

**Keywords:** Social Studies, Development, Nation-building; Sustainable development

**Introduction**

Development is of many processes because of the interrelated forces that influences it. Development with reference to human beings and the country/nation can be previewed from the idea of Nyerere of Tanzania (1979). According to Nyerere (1979), development is “for man, by man and of man”. From this idea, development is a

multi-dimensional process which necessarily involves the totality of man in his environment. Development is a people-centered phenomenon, hence its meaning would certainly be unique to citizens of a country because it affects all aspects of man's life be it political, social, scientific, civic, technological and economically compliant. The content and quality of development can be viewed from how a given people in an area or country adapt themselves to their environment such that they enjoy a better quality of life that is consistent with their needs and aspiration. In other words, development is meaningful when it focuses on helping human beings develop themselves to the utmost level that is beneficial to themselves and the nation. It is therefore significant for Social Studies teachers to be familiar with the concept of development in an environment in order that they may be able to effectively plan their instructional strategies to incorporate factors or aspects of development in the implementation of Social Studies curriculum contents.

Human beings do not exist in vacuum or in isolated entities; they coexist, interdependently and relatively in societies. The purpose of a society is for man and to serve man, there must be a social organization 'of economic activities which is conducive for greater production of things useful for national, spiritual growth and man's welfare. In other words, there must be a functional society to enforce and sustain efficient economic organization and productive techniques for nation-building and prosperity. This is where the education of MAN is important because the individual can exercise his/her thinking abilities intellectually in order to be able to develop and liberate themselves.

The significance of Social Studies education therefore is that society must produce knowledgeable humane citizens who will be in proper disposition with the environment. This is because the objective of Social Studies learning is to promote the development of individuals so that they can become confident, self-reliant, and be able to realize their goal in the society where they operate. It enhances the individuals creative abilities and initiative that would enhance their contribution to nation-building and sustainable development. Thus, Social Studies educators are interested in examining components of Nation Building. This is because there

appears to be a neglect of the citizen in the developmental efforts in a nation blessed abundantly with natural and human resources for a better living. Therefore, Social Studies education is concerned with how Nation Building exercises will result in the development of the Nigerian society. Hence, this paper examines the role of Social Studies in the development and sustenance of nation-building.

### **Concept of Nation-Building for Sustainable National Development**

Nation building is a concerted effort to bring together people for the purpose of achieving common objectives. Contemporary society sees education as a process, means and procedures by which individuals or things are transformed for better. However, the needs of the citizen of a country must not be ignored if a proper transformation is needed. Hence education, whether formal, or informal when provided will help the citizens to cope adequately with the problems of catering for individual basic needs. Citizen should have access to food, shelter, clothing, and good health as an evidence of development in a nation that is well built. In other words, no country can expect a maximum development of its potential when the larger populace of her members remain illiterate, uneducated, undernourished, isolated, disease-ridden and non-social.

### **Developmental Objectives in Nation Building**

The major focus of Nigeria developmental objectives can be seen in three areas, namely: the development of the human beings; increased improvement in the economic welfare of the nation; and improvement in the living condition of the people.

Based on the above reasons, Akinlaye (1997) identified the following developmental objectives for Nation Building: increase in the real income of the average Nigerian citizen; more equitable distribution of income among individuals and socio-economic groups in the country; reduction of the dependence of the economy on the narrow range production activities i.e. crude oil export production; increase in the supply of skilled manpower; reduction in the level of unemployment and under-employment; balanced

development i.e. the attainment of equity in the development of the different sectors of the economy and various geographical areas of the country; increased participation of the citizenry in the ownership, administration and management of productive enterprises; development of science and technology; increased economic productivity; the promotion of a new national orientation conducive for greater discipline, better attitude to work and better behaviour towards environment; and greater self-reliance, self-confidence and self-realization i.e. increased interdependence of productive capacities on the nation's natural resources in seeking to achieve various aspirations of the society.

In conformity to these objectives, he advocated that agricultural production and processing should be given highest priority by the government. This will ensure that agricultural produce are provided to increase the 'ingredient' needed for the feed of the nation's large population in order to reduce importation of food items. Such agricultural production will help to produce and supply other basic raw materials needed for the viable agro allied industries for Nigeria's growth and development.

### **Problems of Nation Building**

In the attempt to building a virile, enviable and stable Nigeria, since independence, political, social, economic and religious issues tend to surface and resurface that discourage such efforts at Nation Building. Omolade (1988) identified the following as problems besetting Nation Building in Nigeria.

The amalgamation of northern and southern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914 paved the way for the northern-southern dichotomy that leads to political instability. Metz (1991) report how Ojukwu made self-rule declaration for Republic of Biafra nation in 30<sup>th</sup> May 1967. However, the Nigerian state resisted the declaration which ended in protracted civil war. This action has been invigorated by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu in recent time agitating for Republic of Biafra. Also, the Niger Delta requesting for the Niger Delta Republic and southwest requesting for Oduduwa Republic. This indicates that since the amalgamation, the inability of the Nigerian state to integrate the ethnic nationality is contributing to lack of Nation

Building in Nigeria. The ethnic factor has played a decisive and negative role on national integration and development. Loyalty to political parties and regime based on ethnic factor has dominated Nigeria as a nation.

Problems of indiscipline, lack of patriotism, corruption and nepotism has seriously affected Nation Building in Nigeria. Olamide (2019) shows that corruption remains a major burden to economic and development in Nigeria. He revealed that many political leaders including ex-governors and many seating governors have been indicted in gross indiscipline and corruption. He also observed that most of the federal appointments as well as employment, fall short of federal character.

Religious intolerance is a volatile issue in Nigeria that is currently serving as a cog in the wheel of progress in achieving effective Nation Building. In recent time riots of religious nature have occurred in many cities in Nigeria with its attendants effects on the socio economic live of many state particularly in the north east and west of the country. Report in the study by Minchakpu (2001) point to the fact that riots have been witnessed and cause by religious intolerance, like that which occurred in Jos 2001. Similarly, Gideon Akaluka died as a result of religious riot caused by Maitatsine fanatics' in 1990.

Transparent discriminatory practices in matters of employment both at the local, state and federal levels is terribly affecting Nation Building in Nigeria. Nigerians now discriminate a lot in matters of employment on the basis of state, religion, race, ethnicity etc.

Language barriers also affect free and easy interaction among Nigerians and this affects Nation Building negatively. Poverty is a factor that affects meaningful Nation Building. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2020) a majority of Nigerians are living below the poverty line of one dollar a day. It means that the earning power of the populace is not able to sustain them on their daily needs.

There is also the problem of leadership and followership i.e. people who lack leadership qualities occupying leadership positions. It has bred a lack of patriotism on the part of followers (citizens). Problems of crime and insecurity arising from lack of good

government. Vices such as examination malpractice, election malpractice and the most worrisome, terrorism by Boko Haram insurgence, poverty and unemployment, ritual activities, advance free fraud, kidnapping — most of the teeming youth have no skills as well as being unemployable graduate abound in our society.

Negative values and attitudes: Duh (2011, 2015) and Rapp (2015) in their separate views tackled the negative attitudes towards materialism and the quest to get rich quick by all means. According to the authors the quest to make wealth without a tangible thing or work that produced the wealth remains questionable.

The idea of the economy depending on crude oil and not making effort to harness other alternative resources that could sustain the Nigerian economy. Tenureship and the problem of vacation from the office is another issue. This is because the political system in Nigeria and governance portray leaders as indispensable. Hence, some have elongated their tenure in the office creating instability in the political system, affecting the process of nation building as a consequence. Observation shows that while some leaders insist on remaining in office is traceable to their neglect of the rule of law and attempting to jettison constitutional provisions.

Omolade (1988), Bornman (2013) and Shulman and Bloom (2014) state that, before a citizen will make effective and committed contributions toward Nation Building, there are conditions that will warrants his involvement. These are: Formal schooling should make a difference in the capacity of building learners to cope with life in the society, that is, Social Studies curriculum for schools should be a powerful content for the development of the learner, their requisite thinking, knowledge and for decision-making skills.

The school should prepare students for more effective participation in communal work through active participation of knowledge, skill and learning experience. Oputeh (2015) observed that enabling environment is a necessary tool for active participation in Nation Building. This is because the twenty-first centuries and the generation of young adults relied on technology-driven economy. Students should acquire the more essential skills of rational thinking/reasoning reasoning ability and development which cannot be accomplished through crash school programme. Curriculum

planners should prepare clear attainable instructional objectives for active classroom interaction of students with students, students with teachers, students with learning materials and students with teachers/knowledge/learning materials. Teachers should be equipped with sufficient Social Studies knowledge and instructional approaches/techniques to enable them use instructional materials effectively. Teachers should be equipped with appropriate evaluation techniques of learning experiences towards achieving the set objectives. In planning the curriculum, planners should put into consideration the ever-changing nature of the society; hence there is need for constant review of the Social Studies curriculum and the general curriculum in the schools.

### **The Role of Social Studies for Sustainable Nation-Building**

It will be of general concern for the school to provide an opportunity or chance for the child in the development of faith. This will encourage the ability to express oneself and build high confidence in the individual. They also need the ability and skill to learn about themselves, societal problems and about wider communities in which they live. It is through this type of education that the child can have a better and greater chance to participate effectively in life issues whether personal relationship, group or community basis. This is made possible when they are directed by giving them a free chance to inquire, investigate and discover for themselves through discussion, experience and decision-making. Social Studies emerge as a school subject in the Nigerian school curriculum in order to modify the dysfunctional inadequacies of the inherited education system and experiences. Therefore, Social Studies has become an inevitable subject that equip the child with relevant knowledge of their fast changing community and the nation. The goal of Social Studies education is to prepare young people to be more humane, rational, respective and responsible participating citizen in a world that has become increasingly interdependent (Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre [CESAC], 1979; National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 1992).

Social Studies is the study of man and his environment, it is a study that emphasizes man's interactions with his environment,

physical, social, economic, cultural, religious, scientific and technological environment. In other words, it is concerned with how the individual live in a defined physical environment (village, town or city) and how he goes about his everyday activities in relation to other people (family, friends, colleagues and teachers etc.), also among the activities he engages himself in everyday life be it social, religious, economic and political. However, the main aspiration of the discipline is directed into inculcating into young learners in school a better understanding of the intricacies of man's existence on earth, so that from such understanding they are better equipped to live and interact more effectively and meaningfully within their environment. In the real sense, the subject touches the very heart of the society because it deals essentially with the social and public issues such as problems of national unity and diversity, cherished value, economic development, population growth problem, family health nutrition, infrastructural amenities issues, problem of indiscipline, interactional understanding, violence, kidnapping and security.

Research in the discipline utilized methods and procedures for its investigation involving inquiry method, cooperative method, action and service learning method, project activities approaches to expose students/learners to the pros and cons of various situation, leaners are able to arrive at their own independent conclusions based on reasoned judgment. Social Studies education methods and procedures expose students to environmental situations to activate critical thinking ability which leads to development base conscious effort of the students/learners-

The purpose of Social Studies education can be outlined as follows: Inculcate national consciousness and aspiration towards national cohesion, unity and progress; Make learners become good citizen capable of and willing to contribute to the development of the society; Inculcate the right type of attitudes, skill and values in the learners; Make learners acquire basic knowledge, feeling and skills as essential pre-requisite to personal development as well as to a positive contribution to the better quality of life of man in the society; Develop in the learner intellectual capacity and ability to build confidence in them, express themselves, personal realization,

initiative, reflective thinking, and resourcefulness for socio-political order (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013).

The task of discipline is geared towards transforming Nigeria into a modern state; healing the social and political wounds of the past decades, nurturing the hopes of good ethnic group relationships and nationalism and engendering constructive reforms to make the nation a just and progressive society. The task of the subject matter also helps to foster the desire for self-reliance, national efficiency and national pride. Social Studies education encourages unity in diversity and breaking of cultural barriers thereby transforming people to become global citizens.

It is therefore clear that these obvious aspiration of discipline is geared towards citizenship process with emphasis on the development of those rational habits of mind and humane attitude that would enable individual learner make informed decision about social and personal matters as reflected in the relevant and usefulness of knowledge taught to the learners in the class, thus helping the learner to become useful, purposeful and knowledgeable human being and responsible participating citizens.

Social Studies education contributes in no small measures in the attainment of national goals through citizenship education. Citizenship education refers to cultural behaviour, knowledge and values exhibited by participating individuals (Ahmed, 2013). Shehi (2002) averred that citizenship education enable citizens understand their civic responsibility and create awareness of their civic duties including, voting, tax and community. He believes that with informed knowledge of citizen education the major elements of can be incorporated into their thinking and activities. Social Studies education therefore accommodates, tolerates diversity and encourages progress in nation-building because we need each other to exist.

Other roles of the discipline for Nation Building and sustainable development as observed by Mezieobi (1994) include: The development of national consciousness and commitment as necessary ingredient for Nation Building; The development of intellectual skills, knowledge and abilities for understanding of the immediate and remote environment for Nation Building; The

inculcation of social value and skills for active social life; Development of rational thinking ability for practical social life; and Promoting value awareness and utilization of some values in tackling dynamic problems in the society.

The problem facing Nigeria today in terms of achieving sustainable development is how to motivate people to change their unpatriotic tendency and activities that are unprogressive behaviour. Human beings by nature are resentful to change. In other words, the idea of the discipline for sustainable development is embedded in its special role in promoting changes in human behaviour to turn things for better and in so doing, Social Studies helps the individuals to develop their competencies and promote positive change in human lives.

Asodike citing Kundan in (Ugoh, 2008) describes sustainable development as a construct, which envision development as meeting the needs of present generation without compromising the needs of the future generation. It implies that while Social Studies meet the need of the present, future generations should not be left out. For example, the activities of the present generation should not jeopardize the future generation. Hence advancement in different sectors of the economy should ensure sustenance of future environment. Therefore, sustainable development has been defined by the Nigeria study action team (NEST, 1991) in Osuji (2004) as “an approach that combines the development needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of the future while also maintaining ecological integrity”. This implies according to Osuji, a development process that is equitable and sensitive to ecological and environmental issues, depends on the initiative, resourcefulness and discipline of human beings who are the managers of developmental programmes. Social Studies Education is therefore seen as the appropriate educational tool that tends to influence developmental process because the general objective of Social Studies is in line with issues of sustainable development as can be seen in issues such as environmental protection, citizenship education, unity in diversity, cooperation and tolerance. Such education is expected to equip the learners to be able to reflect on their own actions that affect their immediate environment, neighbours and seek to

understand their problems and be able to analyze them with a view to relating them to the problems of others. It is attempt to understand their cultural background, and those of their immediate neighbours and be able to integrate the cultural values in these different backgrounds for the purpose of sustainable national development (Akinjide, 2011).

The activation of critical thinking skills among students through Social Studies Education therefore becomes one of the educational demands needed to achieve personal security. Actually, the teaching of Social Studies education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria should have the objective of helping students become more effective in recognizing and avoiding mistakes in reasoning, now that society is changing rapidly, in is social and political, as well as economic demands are getting more complex by the day. Students should be taught to develop liberal minds, computer literacy so as to move to the next level.

### **Conclusion**

Social Studies education in school curriculum is of great help to all students at all levels because it is believed to develop the ability of the learner to adapt to their ever changing environment. The paper concludes that Social Studies education contents directed towards nation building and development is capable of preparing the individual to meaningfully contribute their quota in the effort of achieving the goal and aspiration of the founding fathers of the nation.

### **Way forward**

Through the disciplines, the quality of persons (students/youth) produced by institutions of learning will be repackaged for increasing responsibilities of good citizenship for sustainable national development. Developers of Social Studies curriculum at every level of education should take cognizance of the fact that Social Studies is a live subject and discipline and so should be geared towards ensuring good citizenship behaviour in Nigeria, by instilling the right values in our youths.

Social Studies should be properly taught in all level of education in Nigeria. The discipline has a vital role to play in management of education in Nigeria. Social Studies should be repositioned in the school system. This will help organize learning experiences that will ultimately bring about positive changes in the society in the areas of skills, attitude, values, culture, economic and political aspects of life. Duration to any political position should be adhered to. This will enable the system to comply with constitutional provision. The local government areas should be made functional. This will draw government and governance to the grass root, and the dividend of democracy could be enjoyed.

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