

# **SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION: PANACEA FOR PEACE AND SECURITY TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

BY

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## **Abstract**

This paper focuses on social studies education: panacea for peace and security towards sustainable development in Nigeria. Attempts were made to highlight the role of social studies education in fostering peace and security and thereby championing sustainable development. It examines briefly the concepts of social studies education, objectives of social studies education, challenges of social studies education in Nigeria, peace, security, sustainable development and role of social studies education in promoting peace and security towards sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper went further to proffer some recommendations that, if government and education stakeholders take, will in no small measure promote peace and security and as well ensure sustainable development in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Social Studies Education, Peace, Security, Sustainable Development.

## **Introduction**

Education being the most valuable asset to any nation has been defined differently by different scholars. According to James and Williams (1973), education is the process by which the individual acquires many physical and social capacities demanded of him by the group into which he is born and within which he must function. They went further to say that education is the process of developing the individual physically, spiritually, mentally, morally and socially for his own welfare and for the welfare of the society to which he belongs. In the same vein, Franken, as cited in Dibal (2011), sees education as a functional instrument. To him, it's a means of developing the entire person to enable him live effectively in the present society so that he may be able to advance or improve it.

From the above fact, he concludes that, education relates to some sort of processes in which a desirable state of mind develops. It implies the intentional bringing about of a desirable state of mind. Furthermore, education in its broadest sense encompasses all the processes individuals go through in life to develop and optimally utilize their potentials through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes that

are necessary for effective living in society. Hence, Nigeria as a nation needs education as a basic tool for promoting peace, security and sustainable national development as argued by Handy (1994), that education is the key to economic success for individuals, organizations and nations.

Social studies deals with the problems of human survival and it has no single universally accepted definition. Its definitions are as many as there are authorities in the field and different societies with their peculiar problems. Social studies considers some peculiar problems of a country like lack of unity, peace and lack of development (Dibal, 2011). As a subject in our primary and post primary schools, Social Studies is an answer to societal and national problems. It is a problem-oriented discipline in which man studies and learns about problems of survival in his environment. It is a study of how man influences his environment and in turn, is influenced by his multifarious environment. Ololobou (1989) conceptualizes Social Studies as an organized, integrated study of man and his environment, both physical and social emphasizing on cognition, functional skills and desirable attitudes and actions for the purpose of producing an effective citizenry.

To him, it is not only a study, but also a way of life geared towards the problem of the society so that adequate actions could be taken to create a better society. Kissock (1981) justifies this when he says Social Studies is used in Nigeria to inculcate the concept of nationalism, unity and dependence among a diverse citizenry. It is through Social Studies education that individuals are trained to acquire knowledge, useful skills, desirable values, attitudes and habits to adjust themselves to the condition of the world in which they live. He further stresses that Social Studies is a programme of study which a society uses to instill in the students the knowledge, skills, attitudes and action it considers important concerning the relationship human beings have with each other, their world and themselves. Social Studies therefore, emphasizes the importance of man as he/she interacts, influences and relates to the different environment for productive and happy citizenship. Social Studies is mainly concerned with the study of people (man), their environment, and the society in which they live, how and where they live, how societal structures are formed and how they govern themselves for the general good of society (Onyeaghor, 2015).

### **Conceptual clarifications: Social Studies Education:**

According to Danladi (2005) Social Studies education is a field that studies man along with his activities in relation to his social, economic, political, cultural and physical environments for the purpose of acquiring skills, attitudes and values which are necessary for human (individual) and national (societal) development. Oyesikun (2018) sees Social Studies as a curriculum instrument which embodies knowledge, positive attitudes, sound values and useful skills required and meant to be adequately acquired to help individual learners live, adapt, adjust, relate, interact, survive and to ensure the survival of others in order to contribute effectively to the growth, development and sustainability of the total environment for advancement of mankind.

### **Objectives of Social Studies Education**

Dubey (1980), as cited in Dibal (2011), identifies the following objectives of Social Studies education:

1. The development of good citizenship, the upliftment of moral character and promotion of social understanding in the society.
2. The promotion of national unity and economic development.
3. Preparing pupils/students for the world of work and understanding of everyday problems that they may face as adults.
4. The development of critical thinking, problem solving and decision making for the survival and progress of the nation.
5. Enhancing socialization and acculturation of citizens in the society.

The objectives of Nigerian Social Studies, which are developed to reflect the spirit of Nigerian philosophy of education, lay emphasis on the integration of Nigerian citizens into sound and effect citizens.

The national educational aims and objectives from which Social Studies objectives are drawn are stated in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 1998) as follows:

1. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
2. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes.
3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around.
4. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence necessary for the development of society.

Based on the national education objectives stated in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) Social Studies objectives are drawn for teaching in the Nigerian schools to:

1. Create an awareness and an understanding of our social and physical environment in order to conserve it for national development.
2. Develop a capacity to learn and acquire certain basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking essential to the forming of sound judgment concerning social, economic and political issues.
3. Teach the child to acquire a relevant body

of knowledge and information necessary for personal development and contribution to the betterment of mankind.

4. Develop and appreciate the diverse nature and interdependence of Nigerian communities, wider national, and international communities.

5. Develop in students' positive attitude towards the spirits of friendliness and co-operation necessary for a healthy nation and to inculcate appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness and justice.

With Social Studies objectives reflecting the needs of the society, one easily understands the usefulness of Social Studies as a process of education which examines ways of working in the society in order to understand social problems and thereby, seek solutions to them.

### **Challenges of Social Studies Education:**

Social Studies as a subject has its inherent challenges. Some of these challenges are peculiar to the discipline while others are of a general nature in education. Education constitutes the major instrument for sustainable human development and fulcrum around which every other activity revolves (Ogunjemilua, 2021). Nations which have recorded tremendous feats in the world heavily relied on the instrumentality of education. However, in Nigeria, there seems to be a daily decline in the standard of education. According to President Olusegun Obasanjo in his presidential speech, education system as it stands is a living proof of the damages that bad governance can do to our society and social structure. Tahir (2006) as cited in Ogunjemilua (2021), identifies a number of daunting challenges which Nigerian education is confronted with. These are as follows:

- i. Gender equity in education
- ii. Dearth of teachers
- iii. Overcrowded classrooms
- iv. Inadequate infrastructures
- v. Poor funding of education

However, the challenges listed above are among the shortcomings inherent in Social Studies education, others are

inadequate textbooks, instructional materials and qualified teachers. Therefore, the government at all levels must contribute their respective quota by providing funds to various educational institutions teaching the subject to abate these challenges. This effort will enhance the achievement of stable society and sustainable national development. Teachers on the other hand who are responsible for disseminating knowledge must be properly motivated to give and put in their best. As such the need for salary increment and better working conditions will promote efficiency and productivity in our educational institutions. For the purpose of achieving sustainable national development, government should encourage that learning take place under a conducive environment. As such the dilapidated infrastructural facilities in schools and colleges, must be improved and building of new classrooms for students in order to enhance conducive teaching and learning in our educational institution. In a related development, Gele (2010) posits that lack of fund, infrastructure, furniture, over population, good library, textbooks, instructional resources, adequate qualified trained teachers in all subject areas, good feeding, security protection of citizens lives and properties, inadequate supervision and many other educational crises are hindrance to sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **Peace**

Peace varies from one culture to the other and is affected by the values, visions, perceptions and cultural realities of the people (Best, 2010). According to Jacob (2004), peace is the absence of war or a state of absolute freedom from violent disturbances such as riots and all other forms. Peace therefore, is a period of quietness, devoid of war, disturbances and violence.

### **Security**

Security cannot be narrowed down to defense and military might alone. It is wider than that. Adebak in, as cited in Jah and Gofwan (2021), viewed security as freedom

from danger or threats, and the ability of a nation to protect and develop itself, promote and cherish values and legitimate interests and enhance the well-being of its people. Similarly, Abubakar (2005) argues that recent international debates have raised the need to see security in the broader sense as “the struggle to secure the most basic necessities of life such as food, fuel, medicine, and shelter. “This broader view of security from the perspective of human physiological needs is important to physical and national security and overall peace and development, as social unrest arising from the absence of such basic-human security can indeed lead to security problems and conflicts. Apart from the socio-economic security challenges, Abukakar (2005) identifies some of the major security challenges confronting the nation to include political and electioneering conflicts, ethno-religious crises, ethnic militias, boundary disputes, cultism, criminality and organized crimes. In the same vein, Oshio (2009) opines that Nigeria is today plagued with social disorder, insecurity, poverty, illiteracy, balance of payment deficit, poor health statistics, ethnic and religious conflicts, corruption, crime and criminality and political crises. All these mean that we are very insecure in terms of human wellbeing. Hubert in Ogoh (2008) states that security implies safety for people from both violent and non-violent threat; it is a condition or state that is characterized by freedom, safety for their lives and even their properties. It entails taking preventive measures to reduce vulnerability, minimize risk and taking remedial actions where prevention fails. This is not to say that security of the state is not important but, rather, security of the state should be geared towards the security of human persons not of the regime in place. Hence, security is a sine qua non for survival of any persons, home, organization and nation.

### **Sustainable Development:**

Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is from "Our

Common Future", also known as the Bruntland Report (2013) cited in Kayode (2014), states that "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". According to Adams (2006), sustainable development is a vision of development that encompasses population, animal and plant species, ecosystems, natural resources, and integrated concerns such as the fight against poverty, gender inequality, human rights, education for all, human security, intercultural dialogue, etc. Babawale (2007), on his part defines sustainable development as a deliberate and systematic policy of ensuring the survival of a state in such a way that the social, economic and political necessities that are imperative for the enjoyment of the good life are guaranteed now for incoming generation.

In order to be sustainable, development must combine three main statements: fairness, protection of the environment and efficiency; and this implies the preservation of the social, environmental and economic balance in the utilization of human and natural resources (Legrand Report, as cited in Obro, (2021). In the same vein, Mohammed (2002) identifies the important facts on sustainable development viz:

- (i). Increasing the availability and widening the distribution of basic life sustenance, such as food, shelter and protection;
- (ii). Raising the level of living in addition to higher income, provision of jobs, better education, and greater attention to cultural and humanitarian values, all of which serve to enhance maternal well-being, and also to generate greater individual and national self-esteem; and
- (iii). Expanding the range of economic and social choice to individuals and nation by fencing them from servitude and dependence.



### **The role of Social Studies Education in promoting peace and security towards sustainable development in Nigeria:**

Nigeria is plagued by multi dimensional problems, a problem of socio-economic imbalance, problems of instability, problems which are antithesis to peace, and problems of inequality (Okam and Chukwu, 2005). Therefore, the role of Social Studies in promoting peace and security and in fostering sustainable development makes it relevant as a subject in the school curriculum. Since education is the major instrument for sustaining and transforming society, Akintunde (2004) cited in Akinseye (2008) posits that social studies is important because it deals with social problems. Ajitoni and Olubela (2010) say that instruction in Social Studies, as with many curriculum subjects is aimed at training the learners of today for their roles in meeting the needs of the society in the future. Ogunsanya, Ajiboye and Olubela (2010) emphasise that Social Studies has the capacity to transform learners from individual beings into social beings. This further establishes the transformative roles of Social Studies education through its holistic approaches of integrating acceptable social norms, values, attitudes and skills in the learners. Oyeleke (2011) in related studies asserts that the relevance of Social Studies is not limited to socio-cultural and political life of a society alone, but it also fosters acquisition of knowledge and right types of values and attitudes necessary for making the learners to be environment friendly and stimulate in them such behaviors and practices that promote sustainable development of the natural environment.

According to Kazi (2007), Social Studies as a discipline can be effectively used in any nation to inculcate the right types of values to the citizens which will help in achieving peace and security thereby promoting sustainable development. To him, Social Studies as a multi and inter disciplinary study draws its contents, generalizations, skills, values and attitudes from all forms of knowledge in an attempt to solve the ever evolving social and national

problems leading to peace and unity. The inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness and justice contribute to the development of national goals (Adaralabe, 1980). Studying Social Studies in Nigeria reveals that it is an important subject that can provide the much needed social education that will correct the anomalies in the effort of building up the country as a nation. Therefore, teaching of Social Studies education to students helps them to acquire relevant learning experience which will help them to grow intelligently, law abiding and self-supporting citizens.

Social Studies is a deliberate attempt to educate children and adults in the dynamics of conflict and promotion of peacemaking skills in homes, schools and communities throughout the world using all the channels and instruments of socialization. Social Studies provide education for global security and focuses on direct organized violence, particularly the institution of war and armed conflicts. According to Jacob (2004), Social Studies helps in the inculcation of relevant basic skills in individual in order to survive, live effectively and contribute positively to the growth and development of the society and the nation. When the individuals are changed to embrace peace, certainly the nation will experience peace. In a related development, Oyesikun (2018), asserts that social studies can bring about peaceful environment for possible progress and general development if properly implemented. According to him, Social Studies incorporates all aspects of reforms and innovations needed to be acquired for the progress of the society. He further observes that Social Studies as a curriculum instrument has the capacity to inculcate security consciousness, culture and its imperatives. Hence, it should be vigorously taught in school from primary to junior secondary levels to prepare young minds for effective citizenship so that they will be security compliant.

The pursuit of adequate national security requires a collaboration of the state and relevant stakeholders in detecting,

preventing, controlling and eliminating apurtenance of insecurity. Social Studies further engineer security by inculcating the need for reflective thinking on issues of personal and national importance to discourage an attitude that may breed insecurity, disintegration and disunity. Positive attitudes and values such as honesty, respect, patriotism, loyalty, and peaceful co-existence which are necessary ingredients for national security are better dispensed and inculcated in a Social Studies class. In addition, the subject fosters new and integrated pedagogical practices aimed at resolving insecurity in a bid to achieve sustainable development (Parvwang, 2012). In the same vein Kissock (1981) opines that Social Studies is used in Nigeria to inculcate the concept of nationalism, unity and dependence among a diverse citizenry. It is through Social Studies education that individuals are trained to acquire knowledge, useful skills, desirable values, attitudes and habits to adjust themselves to the condition of the world in which they live. According to him, social Studies is a programme of study which a society uses to instill in the students the knowledge, skills, attitudes and action it considers important concerning the relationship human beings have with each other, their world and themselves. Social Studies emphasize the importance of man as he/she interacts, influences and relates to the different environment for productive and happy citizenship.

### Conclusion

From all indications one can conclude that Social Studies education as a problem solving subject is very important for the unity, peace and development of the country. Because of seminars, workshops and conferences organized from time to time and most Nigerian Universities and Colleges of

Education offer the courses now, the future of Social Studies education will be good. Social Studies, looks at man in the environment, his action at home, in the family, in the village, in school, at play, in politics, at work, in religion and everything man is engaged in his efforts to survive in the environment in which he lives. Social Studies solves our daily problems and hence we cannot do without it. With social studies education, peace and security and sustainable development can be assured.

### Recommendations:

The paper recommends the following:

1. For Nigeria to enjoy peace/security and sustainable development, Social Studies should be accorded high premium in the educational system.
2. Social Studies should be taught compulsorily in the senior secondary school to inculcate in the students a sense of human capacity building before post-secondary education.
3. Peace, security and sustainable development as concepts should be widely discussed in different academic fora in order to strengthen the understanding of the concepts by Nigerians.
4. Re-structuring of Social Studies Education curriculum in Nigeria must be emphasized, it is the best process of changing the lives of young citizens.
5. Provision of adequate and qualified teachers: Government should make the provision of trained teachers that possessed knowledge, professional skills, model techniques of the curriculum content, personal qualities to teach in our schools and colleges.
6. Public enlightenment campaigns, symposiums, workshops, conferences, seminars are required to preach the benefits of being peaceful and sustainable.

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