

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN NATION BUILDING

E. F. K. Salami

Abstract

The process of nation-building is never quite smooth in any country. There will always be problems of all kinds - political, economic, cultural and human. This paper is looking at nation-building as something more than just political development or the building of governmental institutions. Again, Eleazu (1977) explained nation-building as "the process of politically socializing the people into becoming good citizens of the political order, and making the citizens feel they have a stake in the community worth fighting for". In other words, social studies has a key role to play in promoting nation-building in Nigeria, to be able to do this successfully, this paper has outlined a scheme of work and suggested an adaptation of various teaching techniques. Suggestion is also made for the use of human and material resources in order to enrich the dissemination of knowledge.

Introduction

The process of nation-building is never quite smooth in any country. There will always be problems of all kinds - political, economic, cultural and human. This paper is looking at nation-building as something more than just political development or the building of governmental institutions. The aspect of political development is, however, very important because government is the co-ordinating social institution in any given society. So its level of development seriously influences development in other areas of societal life. But beyond state building, nation building involves the development of the right type of feelings among the people. These are feelings of attachment to the country and readiness to work with fellow citizens for the survival and progress of the nation. Such feelings are developed along two lines: the initial willingness of the population to coexist as a group; and the building of a good social system to sustain the feeling of political, economic and cultural institutions, as well as the societal value base.

Thus, in this paper, an attempt will be made to highlight those problems which have been confronting Nigeria in her efforts to attain nationhood, and social studies has a key role to play in promoting nation-building in Nigeria. To be able to do this successfully, this paper has also outlined a scheme of work and suggested an adaptation of various teaching techniques. Suggestion is also made for the use of human material resources in order to enrich the dissemination of knowledge, then conclusion.

Conceptual Framework

Nigeria is still in the process of building a nation, even after 87 years of existence as a 'united' country (1914-2001). A modern 'nation' possesses a human society which has well defined geographical boundaries, defined population, some common purposes or goals and a defined system of government, the population, no matter the extent of their differences in language, culture, religion, share a feeling of oneness. They identify with each other across the dividing lines and demonstrate a mental unity which reflect in their co-operation, understanding and tolerance of each other. They also demonstrate readiness to settle their conflicts peaceably. They believe strongly in the survival of their country as a single entity (Ogunsola. 1989).

The writer asks the question, do Nigerians possess this kind of mental unity and faith in their country at present? So, when talking about nation-building, it is not building a strong stable government alone, but how to build very strong social, cultural and economic ties among Nigerians to make them share a sense of belonging to, and faith in their country.

Eleazu (1977) explained nation-building as "the process of politically socializing the people into becoming good citizens of the political order, and making the citizens feel they have a stake in the community worth fighting for".

This paper tries to look at the problems or constraints Nigerians are facing in the effort of nation-building. According to Alli and Tidy (1984), they highlighted various problems like legitimacy, identity, penetration of government authority, participation, distribution of resources, leadership and followership of nation-building in Nigeria which are discussed below:

- i. Legitimacy: The problem of legitimacy raises questions on the procedure to follow in identifying

leaders especially for public offices; so as to make the authority of government acceptable to all sections of the country. And leadership which does not enjoy legitimacy, that is, followers' acceptance, cannot enjoy their support. Such leaders, if they succeed in imposing themselves on the people, often resort to the use of force to sustain their government, and the national consequence of this is instability. This has been witnessed in different forms in Nigeria under both civilian and military governments. As Nigerians, now approach 2003 general elections, the question is: how do they make the acceptable procedure of elections truly free and fair, to make the leadership they produce legitimate?.

- ii. Identity: The problem of identity deals with the criteria to be employed in deciding who a national or citizen is, and what to do to make people 'feel' they belong and do have a say in the system. Regardless of what the constitution says, the experience in Nigeria is that of mutual distrust, suspicion and fear of domination among the various groups. And this is transferred to the political process where ethnic and religious considerations, rather than merit and ability, dominate. This naturally affects legitimacy.
- Hi. Penetration of Government Authority: In Nigeria, the problem of penetration of governmental authority has to do with the country's level of infrastructural and communication development. The question here is how to go about making the impact of government felt in all parts of the country. The high level of illiteracy and poverty among the populace, there cannot but be a barrier in the process of consultation between the government and the governed. Added to this is the limitation arising from poor road conditions which limit physical contacts between government officials and the people, as well as poor communication facilities, postal system and telephone.
- iv. Participation: The question here is how to ensure a reasonable level of participation not too little, not too much, to make the political system function smoothly. But lack of faith in the state structure, low level of identity, illiteracy and poverty have always affected participation negatively.
- v. Distribution of Resources: This has been a particularly sensitive issue in Nigeria. Up till now, no formula for revenue allocation has been found which is wholly acceptable to every section of the society. Also, the location of major development projects is based more on political consideration than other more crucial factors like viability. Since all the sections of the country are not equally endowed with resources, and since every section of the country seeks development, how then can the government ensure equitable distribution, so that no section feels deprived or cheated? These are the political problems to be resolved as we work on building a Nigerian nation.
- vi. Leadership: The general performance of leaders on assuming office has proved even more serious as source of problem. Selfishness, greed, tendency to hold on to power indefinitely and at all cost, misplaced priorities in public policy, intolerance of criticism and tendency to personalize power all these are the hallmarks of Nigerian leadership since independence. Gradually, it becomes clear that the orientation of the Nigerian leadership class to power and power positions is very negative. This would account for the winner-takes all approach to leadership contests in the country.
- vii. Followership: The followers as a constraint on nation building becomes relevant when the general quality of followership is considered. Since leadership assumes followership, there can be no leader(s) without followers, it is logical to reason that leaders would often reflect the type of followers they have. It is a reality that the general quality of followership in Nigeria is poor. And this has made it easy for leaders to cheat, lie, loot, exploit and still get away free. For one reason, majority of the people are not quite conscious of their fundamental human rights and the obligations of government to the people. For another reason, even those who know may not be able to exercise the rights due to various limitations such as illiteracy, poverty, and the displacement of the traditional value base of society.

Social studies offers mode of instruction and related learning activities which are pertinent to the social needs of individuals and the society at large. In addition, it supports process value needed in nation-building.

Social Studies as a Vehicle for Nation-Building

There has been a growing awareness of the need for the development of fully functioning citizens; citizens who have knowledge about their environments, and the realities of political life as

well as understanding the cultural ideals of Nigerian life. It is in the bid to achieve all these that the Federal Government in its wisdom decided to include social studies in the school curriculum. There is pressing need for Nigeria to examine its traditions, views and beliefs, to correct the injustices that society has perpetrated and chart a new course.

Specifically the only school subject which studies man in his reality and capable of addressing this issue of nation-building adequately is social studies. In the words of Akintola (1980), 'social studies is not just only a study but a way of life'.

The following objectives of social studies are related to the national objectives. According to the 1983 National Social Studies Curriculum for primary schools the objectives of the subject should help the Nigerian school child to:

- a. Develop the ability to adapt to his environment.
- b. Inculcate national consciousness and national unity.
- c. Become good citizens capable of, and willing to contribute to the development of the society
- d. Develop a sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and interdependence of all members of the local community and the wider national and international communities.
- e. Inculcate the right types of values and attitudes.
- f. Acquire the desire for knowledge, respect for truth, nationality, tolerance, use of initiative, organizing capability, self-control comradeliness, co-cooperativeness, liberty and social security; and
- g. Develop in children a positive attitude to citizenship and a desire in them to make a positive personal contribution to the creation of a United Nigeria.

Theoretically, the chief purpose of social studies was to prepare citizens for participation in nation-building. The minds of the young need to be exposed to the analysis, critical thinking and solution of problems. Therefore, the study of social studies in Nigerian schools is very crucial. It is pertinent to say that the contents of the Nigerian Junior Secondary School social studies equally have more meaning to the student's life, and help in the development of attitudes, skills and knowledge.

Generally, when preparing to teach any concept in social studies, the teacher must explore the curriculum and have a scheme of work which serves as the break down of the activities in the topic at hand. This scheme gives an outline of statement of objective(s), concept, attitudes and values to be developed, skills, and abilities to be acquired; facts and information to be learnt, material and instructional aids to be used, as well as teaching techniques and evaluation of learning outcomes (Adaralegbe, 1980).

How to Teach Nation-Building Through Social Studies Education

Social studies analyses man in all its 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 student and makes him/her operate beyond parochial levels like that of ethnicity. It also makes him tolerant and respectful to the views of others, [his disposition is necessary for the enhancement of nation-building.

- i. Value education is a crucial aspect of social studies. The teaching of positive values could serve as an instrument for bringing about desirable positive change in Nigerian value orientation. According to Obike (1993).

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

Values as states of mind are inferred by 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 Ezeigbo (1993) are those which determine the activities, decision or behaviour of persons, political activists, government and institution, on the basis of political considerations. Such political values include patriotism, nationalism, obedience to the law, co-operation, love and merit.

Through value clarification, the teacher in the course of social studies education, guides (be students to develop personal values that would be meaningful to him. With value education, pragmatic values through popular moral codes condemn these kinds of actions 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 behaviour. When these vices are eradicated through social studies problems facing nation-building can be removed:

For the most disturbing factor in Nigeria's under development is Nigerians themselves who are largely bereft of positive values and attitudes germane to effective national development (Mezieobi, 1992).

Social studies education helps to produce effective citizens, which is a basic requirement for nation building. This according to Mezieobi (1992) means:

sensitivity of one's environment active participation in the polity, democratic oriented mind and practices, willingness to assume and perform civic responsibilities, obedience to the laws of the land, one being equipped with intellectual skills essential for rational decision making and sound judgment, defence of one's right, ability to understand, respect and accommodate other individuals, habits essential for effective social living, harmonious co-existence with other members and groups in one polity.

These concepts can be taught through social studies education in primary, secondary, tertiary and teacher training education programmes in Nigeria.

The mode of teaching social studies is inquiry oriented. This makes it an asset to nation building. It eliminates subjectivity, ethnic prejudices, disunity and enables the individuals function effectively as they perform their civic responsibilities to the society. The emphasis on the affective domain in social studies education, encourages feelings of sympathy and patriotism in individuals thereby enabling them to ask questions on how and why or express their feelings and opinions on certain critical issues. They are put in positions to offer solutions when things go wrong.

For the various techniques and strategies of teaching social studies to be effective, materials and instructional aids should be used by the teacher, ii. Materials and instructional aids to be used.

There is equally an awareness and readiness on the part of the teacher with regard to which textbooks and what audio-visual materials should be prepared at hand to illustrate, emphasize, explain and to portray the new knowledge of facts, information, skills, values and attitudes to be presented or acquired. Some of these could be the effective use of the chalkboard on which the teacher puts the key phrases or diagrams and illustrations for illustration and for effect. They could be pictures or real objects to increase awareness and reinforce learning. Others could be events on tape recorders, films and projections, radio, video player and television. Radio programmes such as "You and the Nation" can assist the social studies teacher and his students. In a situation whereby radio broadcast does not

fall into the school time, the teacher could record the incident and bring into class for discussion. In using all the materials the teacher should ensure that he knows what exactly is to be played or broadcast, so as to fully prepare the children towards understanding of the lesson. Discussion should normally follow the use of audio visual aids.

Another important thing that can aid learning is the use of resource persons and they are always popular in the classroom. They can address the class on some particular aspect of their work on specialization. While teaching nation building, an ex-statesman could be invited into the class to explain to the students what the art of governance is all about. This would afford student the opportunity of having first hand knowledge on the topic. Understanding would still be enhanced because students are provided opportunities to ask questions, iii. Evaluation of Learning Outcomes.

Apart from the yearly or terminal tests, the teacher is required to think in advance of how he can assess pupil's progress through quizzes, objective and essay tests. Other assessment procedures to be used include observation of attitude change, value and skills acquisition. If these assessments are properly done, the teacher would be able to identify areas that require further elaboration and explanations and various other ways in which students can be helped.

Conclusion

This paper has been able to identify that beyond state building, nation building involves the development of the right type of feelings among the people. These are feelings of attachment to the country and readiness to work with fellow citizens for the survival and progress of the nation. Such feelings are developed along two lines: the initial willingness of the population to co-exist as a group; and the building of a good social system to sustain the feeling of political, economic and cultural institutions, as well as the societal value base. The paper also highlighted some problems or constraints in the efforts of nation-building in Nigeria.

Since social studies has emerged as a subject essentially designed to provide a bridge and context for understanding scientific and humanistic values, it is expected that it will continue to provide the wind of change in our society. Social studies education can create positive values and skills which would be of tremendous help to nation-building. It is also a discipline that has the facts and information to be learnt, the eight teaching techniques, materials and instructional aids to be used and unique evaluation of learning outcomes as fully discussed by the paper.

References

- Adaralegbe, A. (1980): The Nigerian Social Studies Programme: Retrospect And Prospects, In NERO (1980), *fid. Social Studies: Teaching Issues And Problems*. Benin: Ethiope Publishing Corporation.
- Akintola, J.M. (1980) Keynote Address To Participants At The Seminar For The Clarification Of Meanings Ideas And Concepts Of Social Studies For Development In NERC (1980). Ed. *Social Studies: Teaching issues And Problems*. Binin; Ethiope Publishing Corporation.
- Alii, M. And Tidy, M. (1984): *National And New States In Africa*. Ibadan: Ilesanmi Educational Books, Incorporation.
- Eleazu, U.O. (1977): The Constitutional Structure And Development Of Nigeria In Goldman. R.B. And Wilson, A..1. (lid.) *From Independence To Statehood: Managing Ethnic Conflict In I've African And Asian States*. London: Francis Printer Publications.
- Ezegbe, M.O. (1993): Values And Their Development For Nation-Building Through Social Studies Education. *Nigerian Journal Of Social Studies Review*, Vol. 2 (1).
- Mezieobi, K..A. (1992); *Themes In Social studies Education In Nigeria*. C.)Owerri: Whyte And Whyte Publishers.
- Obike, C.N, (1993): Social Studies Education And Contemporary Nigerian's Value System: The Role Of Social Studies In Re-Ordering Nigerian Values. *Nigerian Journal Of Social Studies Review* Vol. 2(1).
- Ogunsola, (). (1989): Leadership And Nation-Building In Africa: The Paradox OfThe Nigerian Experience, In Bayo Lawal And Kola Okigbade (Eds.), *Issues In Contemporary African Social And Political Thought*. Lagos: Vantage Publishers Nig. Ltd.