

# **SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION: A STARTING POINT TO REFLECT ON THE MENANCE OF CUMULATIVE SOCIAL FAILURES AND POOR EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Quality represents an acceptance norm or an essential characteristics that gives identity or credibility to something. With reference to education, quality refers to the highest or finest stands to be pursued, a sort of degree of excellence to be aimed at. Nigeria , a country that holds a strategic place on the Africa continent, a diplomatic force in West Africa, a major player in world politics with enormous potentials for economic and social development is faced with myraids of problems ranging from political gangsterism, ethnic militancy poaching of maritime resources, illegal drugs dealing, repacious corruption, financial mismanagement are all manifestation of failure of national security. Nigeria is currently entangled in the web of combustible lingering ethnic and religious conflicts. This has brought to limelight the issue persisting state failure and enormous institutional decay in the country. This quickly festered in hydraheaded dimension as frequent attacks on schools, compounding the problems associated with education in Nigeria. The study is an attempt to x-ray the extent of such failures in the economy and the impact on the quality of education in the country, using the social studies classroom. Recommendations were made to the Nigerian government that have come under attack over the luckstre performances and how the situation can be improved.

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria holds a strategic place on the African continent and the global community. This is not unconnected with the fact that Nigeria is a diplomatic force in West Africa and a major player in Africa politics. Nigeria is a home to one fifth of the population of the sub Saharan Africa and the most populous country in the world in which the majority of the population is black. As at 2014, Nigeria surpassed South Africa as the continent's largest economy. Bellying tremendous resources, with a maximum crude oil production capacity of 2.5 million barrels per day. Nigeria ranks as Africa largest producer of oil and the sixth largest oil producing country in the world. Nigeria therefore by all estimation very strategic, politically, diplomatically and economically.

Nigeria is a heterogenous society with enormous potential for economic and social development. However, the state has been entwined with intense conflict and violence from its earliest time under the colonial rule has made progress and development to elude the country. In recent years, the democratization process and the stability of the country are visible jeopardized by the high level violence resulting from political, ethnic and religious conflicts as well as by organized violent crimes in almost all the state of the Federation. Perhaps there was no other time since the civil war era that the Nigeria state was seriously engulfed and in perennial security challenges that threaten the very foundation of the country than in the last few years.

The Nigerian society has been faced with myriad of problems. As Okene ( 2010) puts, it the prevalence of political gangsterism, ethnic militancy, poaching of maritime resources, illegal drug dealing alms trafficking, rapacious corruption and financial mismanagement are manifestation of failures of national security. Nigeria as a country is currently entangled in the web of combustible lingering ethnic and religious conflicts. This has brought to the limelight the issue of persisting state failure and enormous institutional decay in the country.

Nigeria present the Picture of a country where diversionist tendencies abound and in which tensions and violence permeate state- society relations. The absence of a comprehensive constitutional resolution of these matters has led to a strategy of "keeping the lid" on the smoldering cauldron often through the forceful suppression of dissent. Frequently violence breeds further violence leading to an escalating cycle of disorder, Mustapha (2013).

The country present an interesting but paradoxical case study in the comity of nations such that a few years ago, it was almost classified as a failed state and doomed for possible disintegration only that the country has been held together primarily by the ability and willingness of different parts of Nigeria elites" to agree to deals on the distribution of power and resources (house of commons and library 2015)

A country endowed with mineral and human resources capable of ensuring development remains ridden with crisis of governance. Nigeria" political system is deeply flawed and this contributes to rising violence, Olateju (2013). As in many African countries, governance in Nigeria has for decades been characterized by predatory elites and incomplete institutional development. The general attitude is that government positions are avenues to enrich oneself and one" patronage network, Antwi-Dano (2012). As a result, ordinary Nigerian are not only disappointed with the ongoing lack of services or infrastructure, but they are also disenchanted, if not furious with the government, Forest (2012). To put Nigeria governance discussions effectively back in its proper place and perspective, therefore, Eso (2009) argues that for one to grasp the prevailing nuances and the requisite parameters, Nigeria is a nation where transparent and good governance stand blunted. In assessing Nigeria's good governance architecture and record from the overall concept of human security, the emerging picture is at best dismal. The political economy of oil distribution has shaped the style and quality of governance and levels of corruption in the country. Large oil reserves encourage rent seeking and lack of accountability since they do not entail the direct relationship with the population that is implied by taxation. Oke (2011) observes that the Nigerian state is characterized by a confluence of factors. On the other hand, economic interest, political forces, capitalists, entities and other bureaucratic institutions determine the political economic social and other laws or policies suitable or adoptable for the Nigeria state per time. On the other hand the interplay of transnational forces and institutional decadence aggregate in overrunning the efficiency of state apparatuses or mechanism put in place to ensure sustainable use of equitable distribution of benefits from natural resources.

### Indications Of Cumulative Social Failures And Multi-Dimensional Impact On Quality Of Education

Today in Nigeria, the current history is a combustible mix of violent extremism, and thriving home grown insurgencies. The fabric of Nigeria unity appears to be ripped by violent extremism Babalola (2013). A country once

well respected for its role in restoring stability is in some conflict torn states in west Africa, is now in need of the international community's assistance to guarantee peace and security in her own country. The escalating level of violence in Nigeria fits the description of a failed state and the central authority's lack of control to quell the wave of bombing and indiscriminate killings strongly confirms the underlying hypothesis of a failed state, Babalola (2013). Infact Nigerians are beginning to loose faith in the ability of security agents to stop crimes and criminality, through the government as continued to assure the populace that it will win the war against terror.

That the security situation in Nigeria is precarious is without doubt. This is because the country is currently battling with increased terrorism case than it had done in years before. In addition, armed robbers have increased their attacks on banks, where they now use bombs and grenades to blow up strong rooms in banks in other to forcefully steal money. They also invade police stations and confront the police in fatal attacks without retreating and forcefully taking arms in police armoury. It must be noted at this junction that absolute security may not be possible, but the measure of success is usually necessary in distinguishing between a relatively secure society form one under continuous threat of disintegration and dehumanization of its members. Unfortunately, Nigeria seems to belong in the later category with a near collapse of its internal security infrastructure. With a history of colonial domination, protracted military misrule and corrupt civilian regimes, the country's established of internal peace and security reminiscent of the past has become almost completely elusive.

With the return to democracy in 1999 and contrary to the initial expectations, the hitherto repressed interest group reawakened in more violent forms Ajala (2006), compounding the near comatose state of the nation. This quickly fostered in hydra-headed dimensions such as frequent attacks on schools with the climax of the abduction of female pupils in the northern part of the country, compounding the problems associated with girl's education in northern Nigeria. In a country that is struggling with educational infrastructure and qualitative man power to improve on the standard and quality of education, insecurity is further compounding its challenges.

Education is a panacea for national development across the world, Nigeria inclusive. There is no society that does not give adequate attention to her educational growth and development. Apart from the paltry budgetary allocation by the government, insecurity has been an obstacle to educational development in Nigeria. Insecurity has led to the attacks of students and facilities in educational institutions in different Northern states of the country and overtime, a lot of schools have shut down their academic programmes. This has drastically affected the teeming number of students seeking admission into academic institutions at all levels.

It is also observed that a lot of graduates have vowed never to participate in the compulsory one year national youth service corps (NYSC) programme if posted to the Northern part of the country. Those who were inadvertently posted to the North redeploy immediately after the three weeks of mandatory camping seek immediate redeployment to the southern part of the country. This development therefore defeats the core mandate of setting up the NYSC by an Act in 1973. Again is a region short of personnel in the education sector, many teachers have lost their lives to insurgency. The Nation Newspaper of October 8 2015 had it that over 600 teachers have lost their lives to terror attacks. These include 308 in Bornu, 75 in Adamawa, 18 in Yobe, 25 in Kaduna, 120 in Plateau, 63 in Kano and 2 in Gombe. This is in addition to 19,000 teachers displaced from their assentral homes.

The comatose security situation of Nigeria has fostered in other hydra headed dimensions like the detorating public service. As a result, people have to spend their own resources to compensate for lack of public service, reducing the investment capacity of the country. Armed violence or even just the threat of armed violence can lead to reduce foreign investment (FD I). This is particularly true where violence is politically motivated. Insecurity and violence has led to the destruction of health facilities in the North Eastern part of the country mainly forcing health workers to flee or shutdown clinics. This in turn has compelled residents to seek medical attention in neighboring countries, thereby adding the pressure on limited health facilities in the host communities Onuoha (2014).

Apart from insecurity occasioned by the threat and different forms of violence, there is also a bigger dimension of cumulative social failure and this has to do with the army of the unemployed youths. This threat of unemployment is so huge that it can determine the type of development is so huge that it can determine the type of development Nigeria can witness in the next couple of years if something and practical is not done to arrest the situation. These level of

briganda and insecurity in the country has brought Nigeria to a level where it can be linked to a failed or failing country because of the inability of government at different levels to do anything other than the rhetoric of “we are on top of the situation”. Unfortunately, Nigeria can be linked to a state where the apparatuses of state have collapsed like in familiar or other war torn countries, Onwabiko2011.

To achieve a world that upholds the principle of equality in which no one is truly left behind, commitment to the protection of human rights must become a priority which means human rights education must be recognized, respected and protected. Essentially, the militarization of the Nigerian society and the supplanting of constitutional provisions by decrease of the successive ruling military juntas engendered a culture of what United Nations Development Programme in its report called “executive lawlessness and human rights abuse “. Not only were Nigerians denied their most basic political rights, their economic and social rights were also truncated by the gross mismanagement and looting of state resources by the military. It would be recalled that at the political level, disrespect for the fundamental democratic rights of the Nigerian people reached its apogee with the annulment of the June 12 1993 presidential election by the regime of Gen, Ibrahim Babangida. Human rights cannot be respected where the rule of law is neglected. Rule of law means that everybody no matter your position is under the law that is the law is supreme. Not only that the law is supreme, it is also its duty through justice system and other government agencies to protect the rights and dignity of human person.

With an estimated population of 200million and over 250 ethnic nationalities, Nigerians rank the most populous country in black Africa. It is also one of the most resources endowed countries in the continent, having an enormous stock of natural resources that include petroleum, bitumen, gold, coal, columbine, bauxite with very fertile soil and conducive climatic for all year round farming and there is ample distribution of rivers for commercial fishing. Many observers have therefore argued that given the vast pool of human and natural resources at its disposal, Nigeria should have emerged one of the richest countries, not only in Africa but the entire world. This however has not been so. Nigerian is one of the 13poorest nation in the world. About 70% of Nigerians earn less than one dollar a day and the country’s per capital income is put at a little above US \$ 300 Unicef, 2001. Its economy is in shamble, characterized by low hyperinflation, mass unemployment and heavy debt commitment to countries of Europe and America, Omolusi (2015). Social Infrastructures remain largely underdeveloped in poor road networks, inadequate public health facilities and underfunding of education. Oyejide (2018). The military has dominated the country’s affairs for such a long time, providing the context for the pervasive social crisis and violence manifesting in ethno religions conflicts, politically motivated assassination, violent youth agitations and others, Babalola (2019). Phrases like giant with the feet of clay, the sleeping giant and a land of scarcity in the midst of plenty, thus have been used at different times, Fansanmi (2018), to portray the fact of Nigeria” potentials which remain untapped for enhancing the peoples quality of life and sustainable development and development of the country.

Corruption as a menace of cumulative social failure in Nigeria public sector has contributed to remain a clog in the wheel of programmes and goals in Nigeria. Its effects are severe in the emerging economies and worse off for an endemically corrupt policy like Nigeria where positive changes and economic growth are greatly hampered by the fraudulent activities of corrupt public office holders. The resultant social ills far transcend poverty and underdevelopment to poor governance, illegitimacy, social dislocations and state failure. It is in line with these facts above that Transparency International (2010) has placed Nigeria as the 134<sup>th</sup> corrupt country in the world out of 178 countries “on a scale from 10 (very clean) to 0 ( highly corrupt).

Social studies Educations a Starting point to Reflect and Curb Social Failures and poor Educational Quality in Nigeria. It is imperative to help Nigeria to meet its developmental aspirations outside the walls of cumulative social failures, institutional decay and poor educational quality. In wanting to help Nigeria to meet its developmental aspirations, pertinent

questions need to be asked one of which is ‘ Does Nigeria want to develop to meet its human capacity need, infrastructure in the area of education, regular electricity, affordable health care service, economy, politics and to reduce to the minimum cases of political gangsterism, ethnic militancy, poaching of maritime resources, illegal drug trafficking, human kidnapping, rapacious corruption and financial mismanagement which are all indexes of social failure and institutional| decay or does it want to give excuses to justify its failure to develop in spite of the huge

human and natural resources that God has endowed it with. If the answers to the questions above are yes, just as we Nigerians believe them to be, then it has to make efforts to promote security, put measures in place that will help to curb or reduce to the barest minimum noticeable social failures and institutional decay which has negatively bear on the worth and quality of education in Nigeria. This is because it is a fact that no investor, however benevolent, would want to put his or her money in a country where a good return cannot be assured due to the problems of insecurity, instability of policies and utter lawlessness.

The government of Nigeria is hereby advised to make efforts to address the various problems identified above that have militated against the successful implementation of various economic, political and social issues that will enhance not only the total development of the country, but will positively enhance the quality of education and rebrand Nigeria and Nigerians. This can be found in social studies education as a starting point in all schools in Nigeria, from primary to post primary to tertiary levels.

What goes on in the social studies classroom has tremendous impact on all facts of the Nigerian economy, be it security, infrastructural, architecture, education quality development and so on. This is because social studies at a study is centrally based on societal issues with problems of man and his environments as the central core social studies does not only look at problems of man in his environments it goes to the extent of proffering solutions to the problems. Social studies aim at producing citizens with skills, competences, moral values and reasoned judgments to effectively live, interact, interrelate and contribute positively to the economic social, political and cultural development of the society. This perhaps informed the prominent position that social studies is placed in the Nigeria National Policy on

Education within the core subjects of the curricular at against the study of the separate social science.

The usefulness of social studies as a vehicle for the provision of solutions to multi-dimensional problems facing the Nigerian nation is seen from the perspective of it as a way of looking at society in order to understand social problems and thereby help to seek solutions to them. It does this by fostering in the young learners a better understanding of man's interaction with his physical and social environments. Social studies as a way of people is also a process of finding solutions to the problems of the society.

The goals of social studies education may be used to be coterminous with those of the entire school, programme in its effort to help young people to become responsible thinking feeling people. In the United States of America, a question was passed by National council for social studies (1990), thus: can a society that assumes responsible citizen involvement in decision making survive if its members do not or cannot participate in such decision making. Survive if its members do as if or cannot participate in such decision making. To answer this question, social studies committee (2001) came up with the assertion that the major purpose for public education is to prepare young people for informed, responsible citizenship and equally points that social studies has special responsibilities in carrying out that purpose. In social studies classes, students are confronted with questions about the wonders and excitement of mankind in the world. Instructions in social studies give students the knowledge, intellectual skills, civic understanding and disposition towards democratic values which are necessary for individuals to function effectively in a society. Ultimately social studies instructional knowledge helps students assumed their role as responsible citizens and as active contributors to a society that is increasingly diverse and interdependent with other nations of the world such as Nigeria.

Social studies students can use the knowledge and skills acquire to identify problems, reflect on such problems, solve such problems and make reasoned judgment in their daily lives. It helps students require the background knowledge to cast informed votes with the skill to place conducting ideas in context and with the wisdom to make good judgment in dealing with the tension inherent in society such as the unending struggle to find a proper balance between protecting the rights of the individual and promoting a common good. This is the more reason why social studies should be employed to help young people develop competencies in addressing the challenges faced in the world today, such as the ones currently addressed in this paper. Johnson (2002), asserted that all human think, learn, act and develop cognitively socially, physically, emotionally, personally, mentally as well as construct test, confirm revive and apply multiple concepts of and multiple identities as to who they are, to what they think, feel and believe, to what they decide and do, to why they are likely to make certain decisions and act in particular ways and to how they perceive themselves, their abilities, their personality and the world.

Argote (2000) observed that in the process of development, we must recognize that no modern society is self-contained and self-sufficient. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the relationship between our society and the rest of the world community. Experience has shown that the fact that we want many things and do not have them and thus, it is the lack that has created problems in the society. Modern development comes through science and technology and these can only be acquired through dedication, hard work, high sense of cooperation, discipline and responsibility, all of which centers on correct attitudes to life generally which social studies is capable of developing in learners if it is well taught in schools.

In order to improve the attitude, this is the need for citizen to correct views of the needs of a country, to be able to provide these requirements such as above, citizens must have a high sense of national pride and commitment. These are required aspects of social studies education and the needed mechanism to achieve this may be able to employ the use of analysis, using appropriate methods, technique and strategies. These may in turn give quality of character, correct and proper attitude with which the problems in the society could be solved with the course of time in the country. In fact, the Nigerian policy on Education 2004, revised education specifically hopes that social studies will achieve several objectives among is to develop in students positive attitudes of togetherness, and comradeship and cooperation towards a healthy nation, the inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness and justice at work and play as one” contribution to the development of the nation and the promotion of the effective and active citizenship.

We must begin with the young ones as they grow up in social studies classrooms. The social studies teacher must as a matter of urgency inculcate in the child national consciousness and national unity which was the watch word of the founding fathers. Though the average Nigerian values and attitude is that of greed and avariousness, corruption, hooliganism, celebrations of mediocrity, the social studies classroom must be a place of not only reflecting of all these, but also where the child is transformed into agents of peace, good morals, equipped with appropriate values of honesty, integrity and good citizenship. Pupils in social studies classroom are taught national consciousness, respects to constituted authorities, benefits of taking part in community projects without asking for reward, living a riot free life. Through social studies education in the classroom, the child is assisted to acquire attitudes, right type of values and skills required for building a stable, responsive and self-reliant citizenry capable of mobilizing and eliciting human and locally based material resources to achieve their objectives and satisfy their needs. Social studies education is education in the fullest and best sense. It is geared towards the stimulation of the desire for better things and the urge to attain such better things. The social studies teacher is the pivot on which this hangs as the teacher is one that translates policies statements to actions in the classroom.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The many strands of cumulative social failures among Nigerians coupled with the impact quality education can pull the country and the entire education architecture into a downward spiral. Because tackling only one of the factor may not be enough to lift out the education from where it is right now, the following are recommended to enhance the required quality in the system

1. The Nigerian government must ensure the improvement in the lives of Nigerian people by creating jobs, creating affordable housing, improving health care services, strengthening the skill base, protecting the vulnerable and promoting peace and security
2. The government must work hard not only to improve incomes but also to tackle the many social and political factors that promotes reduction in the quality of education as it is in Nigeria today.  
Other recommendations are
  - a. Promoting private enterprise as this is the Nigeria engine for growth. The government must create certain fundamental changes in the security architecture, so that businesses can thrive
  - b. It has been established that cumulative social failures are the bane of qualities and standardized educational system which translates to inappropriate curriculum, inadequate pedagogy, a defective and monopolized examination and abnormal poor performances in placements and final examinations. Government must do everything to stamp out of the system political instability, moral bankruptcy, commercial conflict, in satiable greed, executive recklessness, corruption, cupidity and moral decadence



- c. Social studies education should be given its rightful position in the curricula of schools subjects in Nigeria. Through the right methodology, pupils should be encouraged by social studies teachers to cultivate the right knowledge, skills and value what will benefit them in the future and also the country as a whole.
- D. Social studies teachers should be encouraged to update their professional skills through in service training so as to be able to meet up with the current challenges required of them in teaching the subject.

## CONCLUSION

This paper examined the place of cumulative social failures among Nigerians and its implications for quality in the education enterprise in Nigerian schools. It looked at how Nigeria as a country is currently entangled in the web of combustible lingering failures in all sectors of the Nigerian economy, which has come to negatively affect education quality. The overall effects of the problems above on quality of education and the Nigerian state generally was also examined. The study also foregrounds that there is an intricate relationship between poverty, inequality democratization, governance and poor education quality in nearly all parts of the country. Recommendations were made to the Nigerian government and all stakeholders in education who have come under strong criticism for its lackluster performance in containing the failures experienced in all the sectors in the country.

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