

Democratic Leadership in Nigeria: Social Studies Education as Panacea for Political Growth.

Louisa Oby Unugo

Department of Social Studies
Ebonyi State College of Education,
Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria
obyunugo@gmail.com
07032969511

&

Onwuasuanya Sabina

Department of Social Studies
College of Education (Tech.) Umunze
Anambra State

Abstract

This paper examined social studies education's contribution to the democratic leadership in Nigeria such as: it generates education programs which are concerned with the preparation of citizens to participate in the democratic process, it creates awareness and understanding of our physical environment and the environment of the social and cultural processes, it appreciates the diversity and the interdependence of all members of the local and national communities and the need for cooperation for the unity of the country and international understanding etc. The writer has taken much time to discuss some problems militating against democratic leadership in Nigeria and what effort could social studies education take in order to attain good governance and hence acquire a viable stable democracy in Nigeria. Finally the paper recommends that democratic growth of our nation should be revived by the efficient and effective leadership, political stability, adequate political education, equal opportunities for all citizens irrespective of regional and sectional differences, adherence to the rule of law as a supreme article of faith in democracy.

Introduction

Social studies in Nigeria gives an opportunity for important social and moral political development thereby giving the citizens opportunity of knowing about the political problems of the society in depth and shouting a new song on ways of building a viable nation as a whole through political education and community services.

It is quite true that country Nigeria has had problems with good democratic leaders since independence in 1960. Citizens over the years desire power to fall into the hands of good democratic leaders, leaders who will not look at themselves alone but on national, state, and local perspectives. Nigerian leaders, rather than not looking at themselves more and where they come from, their religion and which political party they belong, but rather are disunited, full of favouritism and engaged in divided and rule tactics. Their loyalty goes more to the political parties to which they belong rather than the nation state. During the recent national elections in the country, all political parties carried their flags rather than carrying the national flag which indicated segregation. This situation becomes very worrisome in making the concept of nation building a reality.

2. Operationalization Of Concepts

2.1 Social Studies

The term social studies have been defined differently by different writers and commissions. Obiadi (1985), defined it as the social, economic, political, cultural and psychological including his effort to attend to his needs.

Forrestes also in kochaar (2002) says that, 'social studies as the name suggests studies his society and their chief aim is to help pupils to understand the world in which they live, and how it came to be, so that they will become responsible citizens. Their aim is promoting critical thinking, encouraging readiness for social change and creating a disposition for acting on behalf of the general welfare, appreciating of other cultures, realization of the independence of man and nation.

The commission of reorganisation of secondary education association united state of America (2005) defined the term Social studies in the following words. "Social studies is understood to be those whose subject matter relates directly to the organisation and development of human society and to the man as a member of social groups". As for me, social studies enable us to make the youths good citizens by inculcating in them certain qualities like cooperation, loyalty, discipline, dedication, faithfulness, honesty, moral and social responsibilities, knowledge and skills, tolerance and natural understanding. These qualities prepare them for useful living in the society and explore how a man interacts with his environment and the relationship between man and man.

2.2 Democracy

Democracy as a concept is a very controversial term without any universally accepted and time tested definition (Babarinde & Ogunyemi, 1992). But the focus of political scientists' occasionally permits some reasonable definitions of democracy.

Robert T. (1994), defines the term as '*a cluster of rule permitting the broadcast and surest, direct and indirect participation of the majority of collectivity.*'

Abraham Lincoln (1809), one time president of U.S.A defined democracy as simply as: "government of the people by the people and for the people." Democracy is a system of government which allows the will of the majority of qualified citizens to hold in a society. The system of government elected by the majority of the electorate or people (qualified adult citizens) for example, in Nigeria you must be 18 years and above before voting or be voted for in an election. It is sometimes referred to as representative government, that is qualified adult citizens select or elect members or representatives into the parliament who then take decisions on their behalf.

2.3 Democratic Leadership

Edem (2003), defined democratic leadership as the style of leadership that supports all social activities which gives strength to the feeling of personal dignity and self-respect among fellow human beings. It permits self-expression, creativity, justice for all, equity, economic wellbeing for all and group interaction.

3. Problems Militating Against Effective Democratic Leadership In Nigeria

The problems of democratic leadership have assumed a phenomenal dimension in the current process of political dispensation, thereby affecting - socio-economic and religious growth in Nigeria. Our nation is faced with numerous problems that make it almost impossible to exercise democratic leadership. Among such problems according to Fadeyiye (2001) are:

Disunity And Unity: many Nigerians including our leaders are ethnic conscious and concerned about themselves at the expense of others. Unity is no more existing in our society

due to competition among minority ethnic groups for the control of political power at the centre and in the sharing of federal post and amenities. These have led to hatred, jealousy and bitter feelings among the different tribes. Sometimes members of opposition parties are liquidated by beating, stoning and even their house set on fire. These attitudes of Nigerians cannot permit good democratic leadership.

Lack Of Dynamic Leadership: *many Nigerian leaders are ethnocentric, corrupt and full of self aggrandizement.* Once a politician gets in to office, he sits tight and manipulates the machinery and resources of government at his disposal to remain in power permanently.

Favouritism: *the manner in which the government establishment and national cake are shared shows favouritism.* For instance, on employment, politicians favour their relatives rather than the qualified people. People suffer for job hawking up and down even graduates these days are doing nothing but pushing wheelbarrows on the street.

Religious Fanaticism: *religious fanaticism or intolerance is the evil that is difficult to contend within Nigeria because it comes not from deep faith, but from lack of it.* These are people who claim that God is on their side. Such individual are morally obligated to do everything in their power, no matter how many people may suffer to act upon these half truths.

North South Dichotomy: *fear for domination agitates the minds of southerners and northerners as well.* This problem is due to the erroneous fact that north is more populated than the south. North is made of seventeen states and these lead them to more advantages to rule and considering the tenure of democracy in Nigeria today, the majority carries the vote. These are some of the fear of southerners and this cause a problem of dichotomy.

Other democratic leadership problems are bribery and corruption, election malpractice, slow decision-making process, lack of respect for the rule of law, lack of respect for the constitution, self centeredness and untruthfulness of elected representatives, election rigging etc. The question that begs for answer is, how and by what means can we address the problem of democratic leadership., Social studies can address the problem because, social studies education is a program which the society uses to inculcate knowledge, skills, attitude, values and actions that will foster harmonious relationship between people and their environment.

4. The Role Of Social Studies Education In Ensuring A Viable And Stable Democratic Leadership In Nigeria

Social studies have been used all over the world to solve problems militating against democracy, especially in the United State of America where it originated in the 1950s. According to Kochar (2002), the great philosophy of social studies among others is to establish and promote good human understanding and relationship among the people of the world:- To develop new approaches to the solution of problems and to promote democratic principles and values among people of the world.

Social studies as the name suggest is the studies of the society and its objectives are in different perspectives, from the angle of educational domain, in terms of emphasis and in general perspectives.

According to Zaria (2003), social studies as a discipline is governed by the belief that can positively influence, modify and change people's behaviour in the direction of accepted norms, values beliefs, attitudes and practice of the society.

The teaching of social studies education can solve the problem of disunity, ethnicity, bribery and corruption, intolerance, laziness, lack of patriotism, political instability and election rigging, etc. The inculcation of the right attitudes and values in the individual through social studies can be of great value to Nigeria as a state. Her social, economic, and religious problems will be eradicated in the long run.

Social studies education seeks to give the people knowledge about their society and the wider world; and about the functioning of their government together with that of the social institutions in the society. It also seeks to equip citizens with facts about life, concepts, ideas and philosophies that influence policies and decision making in various forms of activities in the society. A special aim of social studies education is to create a desire in people to perpetuate those principles of justice and humanity that controls the life of a nation, to create national awareness which cause the heart to beat at our country's glorious past and present.

Social studies education takes care of three educational domains such as (cognitive, affective and psychomotive domain). In the cognitive, social studies develop our intellectual ability to acquire analytical ideas and problems solving by thinking. In the case of affective domain, social studies education leads people to understand and appreciate the fact that they differently exist in life; among people, individual's societies, groups and institutions and that these differences should also be respected. It also makes the individual realize that people have rights which should also be respected. While in psychomotive domain, social studies look at the mind of people and investigating the unconscious element of the mind. Thereby, Social studies education seeks to help citizens become active citizens who will participate effectively in the dynamic life of the society. It helps them to know their rights, privileges, duties and obligation within the society. It aids them to know how they are governed, what the society is expected of them and what they would expect from other members of the society. Social studies education also emphasis on three aspects such as humanities, citizenship and intellectual education.

Humanities: according to ken worthy (1981) and Agbatse (2003), social studies education helps in the various ways such as follows:-

- It helps an individual to comprehend his experience and find meaning in life.
- It helps him achieve personal adjustment with the members of the society so as to enhance his personal growth and development.
- It helps him achieve beneficial decision making guides, as well as develop values that will improve his interpersonal relationship with other members of the society.

Citizenship: Social studies education helps citizens to become active citizens who will participate effectively in the dynamic life of the society. It helps them know their rights, privileges, duties and obligation within the society and also induces an individual to seek his rights and be alive to his responsibilities. It aids them to know how they are governed, what the society is expected of them and what they would expect from other member of the society.

Intellectual: social studies education is aimed at helping citizens develop their intellect to be able to acquire the analytical ideas and problem-solving tools. It also enables them to understand facts, concepts, ideas, philosophies and other forms of knowledge that are communicated to them.

On the general perspective, social studies can give man adequate information and knowledge about his society and the wider world. Social studies therefore can:

- Create in man, an awareness and appreciation of the benefit and result of scientific and technological discoveries and invention and make him see how these affect his everyday life.
- Make man know what the society expects of its member so that he will be able to judge his action as well as those of others.
- Familiarize men with norms of the society, and thus socialize him in accordance with such norms. This will enable him improve and perpetuate his society.

- Help man become a good citizen and develop the necessary values and attitude needed in a democracy.
- Help men develop valuable socially acceptable concepts, ideas and philosophies of life.
- Enable men develop proper value judgment and ability to criticize, analyse, select and objectively a valuable issues and events in their proper perspective. The list can never be exhausted. Therefore, social studies education role in a viable and stable democratic can never be over emphasized. Fadeyiye, (2001).

5. suggestions to improve democratic leadership

As noted above, Nigeria has succeeded in democratizing her political machinery but she has failed in making democracy a way of living. We must therefore adjust our present attitude to the democratic growth of our nation to ensure the survival of our republics through the following:

1. **Efficient And Effective Leadership:** *Our leaders should stop betraying public trust and have the good of the country at heart.* People aspiring to lead must see such offices as a means of service for all and not for personal aggrandizement.
2. **Political Stability:** *The question of winner takes all which has made political power to be seen as “do or die” affairs especially at the federal level should be made financially unattractive.* Apart from this, any leader who is aspiring to the top must start from the grass-root that is, from local government, state to nation level. People would then assess him based on his past performance so that only those who are dedicated and committed would seek for political offices.
3. **Adequate Political Education:** *The dynamic and the complexities of the present democratic Nigerian society require citizens who are educated to empower citizens with norms and skills necessary to carry out responsibilities, citizenship education inculcate into the students the democratic values such as: tolerance for other groups with different value, interest, beliefs, culture, religion and so on, justice and consideration of interest concern for the common goal or public interests.* Therefore, through Social studies education, the youths would be exposed to political literature and experiences that will enable them put into practice the democratic values and also students would acquire the right attitudes to life, as they will learn to cooperate and organize elections and choose their leaders devoid of violence.
4. *Regional and sectional differences should be ignored and unity in diversity should be appreciated by all citizens.*
5. *Equal opportunities for all citizens irrespective of the rule of law as a supreme article of faith in democracy.* This means that no one is above the law and the law is no respecter of any person to law facilities, equal right to fair hearing, and legal advice in the court of law.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, social studies as the study of man in his interaction with his physical and social environment provide answers to important social, and moral questions thereby given the pupils an early opportunity of knowing about the problems of the society, studying them in a depth and doing something practical to help through community service. Social studies education really helps studies or citizens in broadening their outlook, giving them a motive for work and perhaps helping them to become better human beings. Democratic leadership is very idea for personal and national growth and development. It is delicate and fragile, and therefore needs to be nurtured and sustained by its stake holders (citizen). Nigeria is faced with the problems of democratic leadership such as lack of dynamic leadership, election

malpractices, lack of respect for the rule of law, slow decision making etc. These problems can only be addressed by the teaching of social studies education because social studies is governed with the belief that 33-38 positively influence the behaviour of people in the direction of accepted norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices accepted by the society. Any Nigerian citizen that passes through social studies is armed with the weapons of democratic leadership and he/she is fit to be a democratic leader and such leader should be:

- A leader who will know about his environment.
- A leader who will understand his people.
- A leader who will care about his people.
- A leader who would ask if i do this how it will benefit my people.
- A leader who would ask if i do this how it will affect the generation to come.
- A leader who will do away with self and think more of us.
- A leader who will see, who will know and who will care about our future.
- Lastly, a leader who will build a strong, united and democratic Nigeria.

References

- Lincoln, A (1809). *Democracy-Building Information*, Copyright 2004
- Agbatse E.M. (2003). Term paper on *Values and Attitudes Development in Social studies*. Benue state University, Mkd.
- Denga D.I. (2002). *Key note address presented at the 1st National Conference of the faculty of Education*, Benue State university, Makurdi, 11th -14th November, 2002.
- Edem D.A. (2003). *Introduction to Educational Administration in Nigeria*. Ibadan Spectrum Books Ltd.
- Fadeiye (2001). *Social studies for pre-NCE*, Oyo: Immaculate City Publications.
- Kenworthy E.L. (1981). *Social Studies in an Integration of Social Science*.
- Kochaar S.K. (2003). *The Teaching of Social Studies*, New Delhi: Sterling publishers.
- Obiadi G.O. (1985). *Essentials of Social Studies for Schools and Colleges of Education in Nigeria*. L.p.Nigeria Limited.
- Okon, M. D. (2000), The Need for Attitudes Change for a Sustainable Democracy Implication for Counselling and education *Journal of CASSON*. 18(1) 1-9.
- Omenka, I. J. (2005), '*Basic Issue in Public Policy-Making*.' Being a lecture series of Department of Political Science course Pol. 731-Public Policy Analysis, Benue state University, Makurdi.
- Yusuf S.A. (2000), Counselling for Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria., *Journal of CASSON* 18(2) 314-321
- Zaria, L. I. (2005), *Lecture notes on Values, Inquiry, Decision-making and Social Action in Social Studies*; Benue State University, Makurdi.