

Effective Teaching and Learning of Social Studies Education: A Panacea to Terrorism in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines the relevance of the effective teaching and learning of social studies education in Nigeria's Basic Education Schools in curbing terrorism in Nigeria. The paper looks at the concept of social studies education and terrorism in Nigeria and findings reveal that the people involved in terrorism are intolerant of divergent and opposing views and this could effectively be managed if the children and youths imbibe the culture of unity, respect, social values, and tolerance of opposing and divergent views with the effective teaching and learning of social studies. Findings further reveal that the teaching of social studies in Nigerian schools is not meeting the desired objectives, not because of the quality of the curriculum structure but ineffective delivery of the subject. The paper concludes that the effective teaching and learning of social studies education is a veritable tool that can be used to instill social values in the citizenry right from a young age which will nip social ills like terrorism in the bud. The paper recommended that Social Studies should not be taught as a mere academic exercise to fulfill the directives of the planners of the Nigerian Educational Systems. The philosophy and objectives of the course should be in the mind of the teachers as they impart knowledge. Also, practical demonstration of love and tolerance of the divergent views should be expressed. Adequate mechanisms to access the students' assimilation and practice of the social values and discipline they learnt from the studies of social studies should be devised and be put in place.

Keywords: *Teaching, Social Studies, Nigeria, Basic Schools, Terrorism, Boko Haram*

Introduction

Social Studies Education as a field of educational study involves issues that deal with the problems of human relationship in the community and beyond. It also includes human relationship with other seemingly alien cultures and values. These issues and their rightful application form the values which control the social relationship of individuals in the society. It is of much importance that the teaching/learning of social studies in the Basic Education phase of the Nigerian Educational System, helps to mold and shape the students who reflect and translate the knowledge acquired to the larger society. Little wonder, the school space is a reflection of the larger society. It is believed that schools should teach children to imbibe the role of leaders, parents, group members, members in the family, and members of the community at large through the correct delivery of social studies education.

One of the aims and objectives of education in Nigeria is “the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian Society” (NPE, 2004). This paper therefore, seeks to establish the relationship between the effective teaching of social studies in Nigeria's basic schools which amongst others, inculcates in students the spirit of harmonious relationship between people in the society and the respect and regard for each other's culture, religion and other affiliations and the emergence of the act of terrorism in Nigeria being perpetrated by the Boko Haram insurgents in the Northern part of Nigeria, which came about because a group of people

could not tolerate the opposing views of people of other creed and faith. This paper is divided into four sections that look at Terrorism in Nigeria and the emergence of Boko Haram insurgents, the concept of social studies, teaching and learning of social studies and finally, finding the missing link that ought to be bridged.

Terrorism in Nigeria

One major problem associated with the study of terrorism and irregular warfare is lack of definite definition because of the relative and subjective lenses through which people view the subject. Much of the confusion associated with terrorism stems from the use of emotive language in its description. According to Kiras (2008), the term 'freedom fighter' connotes heroism while 'terrorism' conveys cowardice. Terrorism is unlike regular warfare where battle lines are defined and combatants and non-combatants are clear. It has been described by military professionals as a nuisance whose objective is unclear and whose time of victory is unknown. Kiras (2008) defined terrorism as the sustained use of violence against symbolic government and civilian targets by a small group for political purposes, such as inspiring fear and drawing widespread attention to a political grievance. Terrorists therefore, seek attention for their cause to generate domestic and international empathy for their plight.

Oyeniya (2010) explains that although, activities of different groups that target civilians are definitely terrorism in nature, the attempts of the government in Nigeria to use this label may have created some confusion, especially when political opponents, civil society groups, and opponents of governments have also been branded terrorists. There are also doubts as to whether groups agitating for purely parochial interests on ethnic and religious lines are terrorists groups because of how they have been classified by the United Nations and the government of the United States of America. The UN consolidates a list, which individuals and entities linked to Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, and the Taliban as terrorists.

It is also important to conceptualize terrorism within an African context because of the scope of this paper. The African Union (AU) Convention on the Prevention and Combating Terrorism Article 1 (3) defines terrorism as any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a State Party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to any person, any number or group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage and is calculated or intended to:

- * intimidate, put in fear, coerce or induce any government, body, institution, the general public or any segment thereof, to do or abstain from doing any act, or to adopt or abandon a particular standpoint or to act according to certain principles; or
- * disrupt any public service, the delivery of any essential service to the public or to create a public emergency; or
- * create general insurrection in a State.

The AU, in article 3(1), however notes that:

The struggle waged by people in accordance with the principles of international law for their liberation or self-determination, including armed struggle against colonialism, occupation, aggression and domination by foreign forces.

Political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other motives shall not be a justifiable defense against a terrorist act (Oyeniya, 2010).

Terrorism in Nigeria became pronounced with the activities of the Islamist group, Jama'atu Ahlil-sunna lidd'awati wal jihad. The persistent theme of the group's condemnation of some aspects of Western schooling earned the group the sobriquet of 'Boko Haram' in the Nigerian media which simply translates to 'Western Education is a sin or forbidden'. The group became loose and unleashed

mayhem on government apparatus when its leader, Muhammad Yusuf was allegedly extra judicially killed by law enforcement agents in July 2009 and subsequent clampdown on their members. The group has claimed responsibilities for several attacks on government buildings, Christians as well as Muslims worship centers. These attacks which were to a large extent restricted to Maiduguri, the Borno state capital in its earliest stage has spread to almost all the major cities of North-Eastern Nigeria.

The insurgency of 'Boko Haram' against security forces and those they believed collaborated with the security forces began in 2010. This public re-emergence of the group after the death of their leader was on the 7th of September 2010, when the group led a massive well-armed attack on Bauchi Prison, freeing over 700 detained members of the movement. The group distributed two leaflets to terrified residents of the area (Adamu,2012). The first was on half A4 printer paper on which the following was written: “Jama'atu AhlilSunnah lidda'awati wal jihad ba Boko Haram ba” which literarily means “we are followers of the traditions of the Prophet (Muhammad) for propagation (of Islam) and Jihad and not Boko Haram”.

According to Adamu, (2012), the second leaflet on full A4 paper and titled 'In Maye Ya Manta' [If the perpetrators have forgotten, (the victim will not)] contained the first articulation of their new militant insurgency stating amongst others:

“Everyone can attest to the fact that since we started our activities about eight to nine years ago, we have never molested anyone. We only preach that it is forbidden to follow any path that is contrary to what Allah through his messenger (Prophet Muhammad) commands us to follow. You are all witnesses to the sudden attack in our mosque during the early dawn prayers by this oppressive government, shooting and killing our members and arresting others. And yet there are, among our brothers those who act as agents of the government and point us out for government forces to kill or arrest. This serves as a general notice to all: Fighting this government is mandatory for everyone. Whoever refuses will be accountable to Allah. For us, we will either die than fail Allah on the account of our deeds. Whoever can, join us; if not, shut up, for it does not concern you, leave us alone and watch what will transpire.”

With this write up, the group formally declared a Jihad against the country called Nigeria and also declared its Islamist agenda. The Boko Haram menace had led to the death of thousands of innocent people including women and children. It has also rendered several other thousand homeless and scattered in different camps across the country. The wanton kidnap of people especially women and female students leaves more to be desired. The Chibok girls and several other kidnap cases are still fresh in our memory. The question then is where lies the knowledge of harmonious and cordial relationship as members of a community? Where is respect and dignity for human lives? Where are our social values that are well cherished in the African traditional system? These questions which are begging for answers brings us to the crux of this paper which looks at social studies education as the panacea to insecurity issues in Nigeria. It is of the belief that if youths are properly taught social values as contained in the curriculum structure of social studies education of the Nigerian Schools, this brazen display of intolerance, lack of respect, violent opposition of other people's culture and religion will have been stemmed.

The Concept of Social Studies Education

Social Studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. According to the National Council of Social Studies Task force on standards for teaching and learning in the social studies, the primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse and democratic society in an independent world. Lybarger (2010) said the modern conception of social studies arguably began with the influential 1916 study tagged 'Social

Studies in Secondary Education' which was put together by the National Education Association and published by the United States Office of Education. The subject of social studies has come to stay in Nigeria's basic education schools. Adesina and Adeyemi (2006) believed that it is the correct drug that could be used to heal the ailment of moral decadence and instill in the youth a sense of decent behaviour. Obidoa (1991) also believes that the specific objectives of social studies education are to make the children to:

- i) Develop an understanding of their immediate surroundings;
- ii) Develop certain skills which will enable the children to deal with and manage the forces of the world in which they live; and
- iii) Learn how to live harmoniously in a society where many different groups co-exist.

Along the line, social studies could be seen as a programme of study in our schools which is used to inculcate in the learners the knowledge, skills, attitude and actions considered important in human relationship in the society.

Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre (CESAC) (1993) also defined social studies as a subject concerned with the way man lives in and interacts with his social and physical environments and how science and technology help him to live well in these environments. Adarelegbe (1978) opined in his definition of social studies that the discipline is basically the study of social sciences as separate discipline with a view to familiarizing students with the basic concepts of the discipline and with methods of inquiry and modes of thought of the scholars in those discipline. According to Adesina and Adeyemi (2006), it is against this backdrop that Adarelegbe, CESAC, and Obidoa explained the following points as some reasons why we study social studies in Nigeria:

- i) Social Studies is meant to teach and train Nigerians to be good citizens and nation builders;
- ii) It enables Nigerians to know and use the resources of their physical environment as well;
- iii) It helps young people and adults to understand the modern world;
- iv) Trains people to be effective leaders and good followers;
- v) Through social studies, we learn about our inheritance, our past and present experiences and how to use these to solve our present problems;
- vi) It makes people understand their culture and the culture of other Nigerians. Thus, Nigerians can appreciate their differences and the need to live together as one society;
- vii) It helps students to develop a good sense of moral and social responsibility;
- viii) It helps to develop students curiosity about the environment;
- ix) It makes people realize the need for honesty, hard work, and cooperation with others in the society;
- x) It is one of the subjects by which the Nigerian national Objectives in Education can be achieved;
- xi) It helps people to acquire different kinds of skills, for example, reading, listening, observation and analysis;
- xii) It provides a good means of achieving the pledge to Nigeria as one country; to be faithful, loyal and honest, to serve the nation and to defend and uphold its unity, honour and glory;
- xiii) It provides a platform for students to learn to work with people at all levels, be it local community, local government council, state government or the Federal Government;

The general belief of curriculum planners for social studies is to provide a forum whereby children would be taught how to imbibe the values in the Nigerian society. The provisions and objectives set for the accomplishment of social goals are worthwhile enough to achieve the set goals. The objectives are laudable enough to bring about a worthwhile end. The values emphasized in the current curriculum of social studies are those ones which are important to get across to the school children. With the values and attitudes for survival, aimed at in this national guide, it is hopeful that students at the end of the courses should be able to develop the right type of attitude and learn more about their society and others of the right type of value that needs to be imbibed.

Teaching of Social Studies

Social Studies is a core subject from Basic 1 – 9 schools in Nigeria. Due to the importance placed on this field of knowledge, it is compulsory to be taught in Nigerian basic schools. According to the NCCE Minimum Standards on Social Studies (2014), the course is designed to inculcate in Nigerians from an early age, how to deal with the complexity of the world around and beyond them. It is worthy to note that Basic education in Nigeria which spans nine solid years is free and compulsory for all children. If all children pass through this all important subject which instills social values, discipline and respect for divergent views, why then, the intolerant disposition to divergent opinions and views as exemplified by the Boko Haram insurgents in the North – Eastern part of Nigeria.

This paper observed that Social Studies is a core subject taught in all Basic Education Schools in Nigeria both in the public and privately owned educational institutions and is expected to teach and inculcate in the learner, such values as good morals, honesty, hard work, tolerance, respect for law and order etc., but what is ground today, goes contrary to the expected. The curriculum of social studies taught in Nigerian Basic Education Schools as planned and prepared by the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) is qualitative to instill the desired social values on students but the subject is being taught just like any other, without stressing its importance. This may be as a result of the teacher being nonchalant or lacking the requisite competence to teach the subject for the desired goal to be achieved.

Social Studies is taught in most Nigerian Basic Education Schools as a mere academic exercise to fulfill the directives of the planners of the Nigerian Educational Systems without bearing in mind the philosophy and objectives of the course. Most teachers in the Nigerian basic Education Schools do not necessary align students' behaviour in the school with lessons of social studies taught. Most teachers are more concerned with delivering their lessons than concerning themselves with trying to know if students imbibe and practice the social values taught.

In spite of the fact that the Federal Government of Nigeria made Basic Education free and compulsory to all her citizens, some children of school age due to some factors including ignorance, forced child labour and economic plight, do not attend the Basic Education Schools in Nigeria. Thus, this category of children can easily be recruited for vices including terrorism.

There are no adequate mechanisms in place to assess the students' assimilation and practice of the social values and discipline they learnt from the studies of social studies. Counseling and punitive measures are scarcely meted out to erring students who go against social norms in most basic schools. This is also prevalent in Nigeria's tertiary institutions where University Degrees which officially should be awarded to those students who performed satisfactorily in both character and learning in line with the spirit and philosophy of Nigeria education, are now awarded to those who satisfy only the learning requirement even if they are deficient in character.

Generally, the Nigerian youths do not have much regards to social values in the community. Most probably because of the high level of corruption that has permeated the fabric of the Nigerian society. Students and youths care more on how they become wealthy as wealth has become a measure of success in the society not minding the means. This is because, the larger members of the society

who are 'successful' are their role models and a high percentage of these 'successful' people threw away social norms and values just to achieve their aims. It is more worrisome when these 'successful' men are not even investigated by the community leadership to know the source of their riches; instead, they confer chieftaincy titles and awards on them. As the saying goes 'respect is reciprocal.' The Nigerian youths believe that the government does not care for them and as such should not be seen to care for them. They draw analogies from nations who make provision for the youths in terms of education, loan facilities, employment etc. Nigerians have general apathy towards patriotism which could have bred love for the country, her government and citizens.

Conclusion

Insurgency as being perpetrated by the Boko Haram elements began from the feeling that something was wrong with the Nigerian Educational System called 'Boko' hence the tag of the group 'Boko Haram' which literally translates to 'education is forbidden or a sin'. This intolerance of a divergent and opposing view on education coupled with disregard for the government authorities and the government's resolve to crush rebellious elements gave way to the level of insurgency that is being managed in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria. It is however, the submission of this paper that if the insurgents had imbibed the ideals of social values as a member of a community as contained in the structure of the Social studies curriculum which is loaded to inculcate social values, norms and tolerance in children and youth especially when taught effectively in the Nigerian basic education schools, it is most probable that people would have been able to accept divergent and opposing opinions and see the state and its apparatus as a symbol of power.

Recommendations:

1. Social Studies should not be taught as a mere academic exercise to fulfill the directives of the planners of the Nigerian Educational Systems. The philosophy and objectives of the course should be in the mind of the teachers as they impart knowledge. Practical demonstration of love and tolerance of the divergent views should be expressed. Social Studies class should be a demonstrative one.
2. Social Studies teachers should monitor their students and keep reminding them of social values in and out of the classroom. They should not be nonchalant about the activities of their students.
3. The Federal Government of Nigeria should as a matter of policy enforce the free and compulsory Basic Education to all her citizens of school age. The government should also look at the various factors that would prevent children of school age from attending school in a bid to ameliorating them.
4. Adequate mechanisms to access the students' assimilation and practice of the social values and discipline they learnt from the studies of social studies should be devised and be put in place. Counseling and punitive measures should be meted out to erring students who go against social norms in basic schools. Certificates should be awarded in character and learning in line with the spirit and philosophy of Nigeria education.
5. The community leadership should encourage hard work and reward dutiful citizens of the community like what was practiced in the old African political system irrespective of the person's financial status. The community should put in measures to investigate the source of riches and if found to be corrupt, be treated like a leper in the community. This way, it will discourage the youths from making them their role models

6. The Nigerian government should be more responsive to her citizens especially the youths. Adequate educational opportunities should be provided and employment opportunities should be created. The Federal Government should also provide enabling environment for small scale enterprises to thrive by providing the basic infrastructure and loan facilities for the enterprising youths to create wealth and shun social vices.

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