

## PEACE-BUILDING IN NIGERIA: SOCIAL STUDIES AS THE ENHANCEMENT INSTRUMENT

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### Abstract

*Peace is an inevitability for social cohesion, social stability, accelerated national development and in fact sustainable peace-building. This paper concerned about the increasing spate of conflicts in Nigeria that appear to make peace culture and its accompaniment-peace building-a mirage in Nigeria, insightfully articulated the pre-conditions that must be put in place and become our preponderating way of life before peace-building can thrive or become realistically rife in our context. Nevertheless, this paper notes, with emphasis, that social studies education, as a field of study, is a portent instrument for sustainable peace-building which cannot be jettisoned in an articulate peace-building striving.*

**Keywords:** *Peace-building, social studies, enhancement instrument.*

### Introduction

Peace is very inevitable for any individual, persons, group or groups for moving forward in human's sustenance strivings. Similarly, no nation that peace has eluded can be realistically said to be having accelerated strides in the national developmental continuum. These and more account for why peace is a lexicon or parlance or even a sing-song everywhere, name it: at home, the community, the state, the nation, in the streets, groups and human organizations in their variety.

Irrespective of the truism that human's social interactions cannot completely escape from conflict situations of all magnitude or dimensions that abound, and the fact that tractable and intractable "conflict situations (in Nigeria) appear to have sent peace on exile" (Mezieobi; Nzokurum & Njoku, 2013 p.108), and sent flames of fear, uncertainty, unhappiness, untold stress on the nerves



and blood veins of Nigerians, and seem to have impaired governments' concerted attention to the dividends of democracy effective delivery process, peace is, more than any other material thing, desired for its unquantifiable virtues.

While the best of peace is what Odedele and Egotanwa (2010 p.191) described as "positive peace", which is peace devoid of coercive imposition but that that emanates from internal state of human's-mind-motored enduring cooperation and cordial co-existence. While this manner of 'positive peace' needs to be sustained on account of its desirable import on all facets of human existence and societal longevity; the peace-building architecture needs to be unveiled.

Of all that can be said about the roadmap to peace-building, that will cohere 'lasting peace in any human society', the jettisoning of social studies is advocating false sense of peace-building as social studies education holds the key to enduring peace-building.

The burden of this exposition is to pinpoint the place of social studies education in peace-building in Nigeria that will stand the test of time.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

Consequent on the fact, according to Mezieobi and Mezieobi in Mezieobi and Wali (2020 p.2), that:

*Clarification of concepts is an inevitable pre-condition or in fact concomitant of a...(good) discourse...the import...(of which) is to make for ease of (communicative) understanding (and effective meaning-sharing) of the...communicators (the communicator and his audience) and to know from where the communicator is coming.*

three concepts in this paper need to be briefly explained. They are peace-building, social studies and enhancement instrument.

### **Peace-Building: Conceptualized**

If peace is "a state of relative tranquility or calmness which frees a circumstance (the environment, group or groups, human organization or a society) from commotion, chaos, violence (unmanageable tractable or intractable conflict) that may destabilize the situation and stifle activities, future plans and development" (Mezieobi, Nzokurum and Njoku, 2013 p.109), then peace-building can be said to refer to a continual nurturance of a condition such that harmony and co-existence of humans become preponderating and, therefore, drowns possibilities of social disorder or instability.

Oparanozie (2013 p.20) succinctly made the above point when he viewed peace-building as "gradually (and continuously) making stronger (or entrenching) a condition or situation in which individuals or group(s) are staying together (or engaged in inter-personal or inter-group social interaction) with...(significantly) reduced conflict that is not worth any worries". In this way, the stubborn 'root causes of conflict' are assuaged, truncated or ameliorated.

### **Social Studies: Contextualized**

There is no universally accepted definition of social studies. This is consequent on environmental peculiarities and, therefore, social studies is



society specific or relative. It is on this understanding that Wronski (1981 p.22) averred that "...what social studies is...vary from country to country..."

With specific reference to Nigeria, Mezieobi and Essien in Mezieobi; Oyesikun and Abdus-Salam (2020 p.4) provided a longish but apt and comprehensive meaning of social studies in our context when they opined that social studies is:

*a discrete and integrated discipline or field of study which is concerned with man in his environments (social, political, economic, physical, psychological, science and technological) in terms of their reciprocal influences and sensitization (of man) to his environments as well as in his interpersonal or inter-group relationships and which (also) endows man with the (contemplative), critical reflective, (evaluative) capacities and skills to identify his societal problems, challenges, conquer them (with reasoned sound decisions) and, in addition become (worthy character driven) socio-civic competent for his good living, active participative relevance in Nigeria and the globalized village.*

### **Peace-Building Movement In Nigeria: The Inevitable Pre-Conditions**

Peace-building anywhere does not just occur spontaneously or emanate from the vacuum. Peace must first pervasively exist and, therefore, provide the spring board on which peace-building takes off from.

The Nigerian society is characterized by pretentious peace or false sense of peace. On this note, Mezieobi, Nzokurum and Njoku (2013 p.108) posited that "there is no peace in the various communities that constitute each of the 477 local government areas in Nigeria. Conflict situations appear to have sent peace on exile". In this context, for peace-building to make its realistic beginning, the following pre-conditions must be recognized and prioritized. They are:

1. Cognizant of the fact that peace is inevitable for our harmonious co-existence and for progress in nation-building, we must eschew disintegrative nationalism or disunity, recognize that Nigeria is one of the nations in the comity of nations in the globe that earnestly to move forward and, therefore, sue for peaceful environment.
2. Peace that is desired is realistic peace that will entrench cohere social stability in truth, that will preponderate and be seen as our life style, be habituated in our real life style and not pretentious peace in the garb of sheer mouthed peace for shere show or peace for propagandizing in the international community.
3. While what Galting in Professor Utulu (2013 p.3) described as "positive peace which...(is) the absence of unjust structures, unequal relationships, justice and inner peace at individual level" is desired, we should not be oblivious of the fact that the inevitability of social interaction, particularly in a multi-ethnic society such as ours, will no doubt engender some measure of conflict which though is counter-productive to peace is, according to Crawford and Bodine (1996 p.iv) "a natural, vital part of life", coupled with the fact, according to Popenoe (1977 p.49), that "a conflict-free society (which is unthinkable) would be lifeless with little interest or dynamic quality".



4. In the understanding that conflict can thwart peace and in fact deter accelerated national progress, it behoves on all to put their hands on the deck towards obliterating the root causes or sources of conflict or exhibit superlative restraints or avoidance of the bewildering array of factors that may cause conflict situation(s).
5. In the event of conflicts rearing their ugly head to scuttle peace, for peace to reign supreme, we should respect all the conflict-resolution approaches that are acclaimed and are available. The conflict-resolution strategies, according to Mezieobi (1994) will include compromise, capitulation, fate control, arbitration, mediation, bargaining and exchange, litigation in which independence of the judiciary is functionally rife in truth as well as the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism.

In order that conflict-resolution strategies will be respected and peace culture given a good chance to thrive, Mezieobi & Mezieobi (2012) recommend implementable conflict resolution education which should generate peaceful conditions and focus on constructive conflict resolution approaches, creative cooperation in human relationships, violence prevention and anger management.

6. In the bid to entrench peace culture everywhere, scholars and writers have made or recommended conflict-avoidance, respect of conflict-resolution approaches, conflict management, establishment of Conflict Management Commission in all levels of government Odedele and Egotanwa (2010) also posit that peace culture can be promoted through tolerance, social justice, respect of human rights, dialogue and diplomacy. To these may perhaps be added integration of the best ways of indigenous settlement strategies with the contemporary litigation system of the judicial system and the Alternative Dispute Resolution management system.

Irrespective of these brilliant ideas as to how to entrench peace, relative positive peace appears to elude Nigeria in all spheres of life. What appears to be preponderating is negative or coerced peace and the fear of the consequences of deviating from what the forced peace movers want or have put in place.

7. A majority of scholars such as Oparanozie (2016), Akpuru-Aja (2007), Best (2012), Osisiogu and Onoja (2016) who have dared discourses on peace and conflict-resolution in the bid to make peace reign for peace-building, ignored peace education as an inevitable agendum for pervasive peace institutionalization and in fact peace-building.
8. The restrictive programmes of peace and conflict-resolution in some of the Universities' Departments of Sociology and Political Science and in the General Studies' Units of our tertiary educational institutions are grossly inadequate to cohere the much needed pervasive peace culture in Nigeria, let alone trigger peace-building agenda.
9. Scholars (Iwegbu & Ossai, 2013; Edinyang, 2013) who have recognized the need for peace education, as a necessary educational culture, have barely, in their expositions on peace education, made prescriptions on Peace Education Curriculum as well as prescribed peace education pedagogic methodics, all of which are only as good as the document in which they appear as the recommendations have fallen on the deaf ears of the educational policy formulators. What is most worrisome in these



scholars' suggestion as to the strategies for teaching peace education is that values' clarifying methods were fallaciously relegated.

### **Peace-Building: Social Studies Education As The Inevitable Instrument**

Mezieobi (1994 p.86) opined that "there is the problem of world peace. The maintenance of peace the world over is a universal desirability and concern. ...The place of peace in national and international co-existence, interdependence, survival and nation-building needs no emphasis".

Peace in Nigeria whether one is thinking of relative peace, as total peace is the preserve of an ideal society which is practically impossible, or positive peace, though desired, are on the run in Nigeria and have eluded us. But if values are "the determiners in...(individuals or group) that influence...(the individuals or groups) choice..." (Inlow in Mezieobi and Danlad, 2012 p.51) "of what is desirable or undesirable, worthwhile or worthless, good or bad, morally right or morally wrong, important or unimportant, beneficial or not, beautiful or ugly" (Mezieobi, 1992 p.67) and if according to Dressler (1969 p.68) value is "an individual's acquired...(or societally accepted and widely acclaimed) judgement of the degree in which a particular stimulus is desirable or undesirable", then the problem of enduring peace in Nigeria is largely that we have not placed incontrovertible, emulative, realistic, discipline-motored premium on positive values that are catalytic to engendering positive peace and its accompaniment: peace-building.

A distinguishing feature of social studies education, as a professional field of study or discipline, is that unlike most professional disciplines in Nigeria's educational curricula such as the social sciences, social studies education is the only subject area that is not 'value free' but values' laden or values' saturated. Professor Mkpa (1993 p.24) gave further credence to the foregoing claim when he opined that "social studies...possesses great potentials for affective (values) learning...more than other school subjects". Besides the potentialities or professional endowment of social studies education in enhancing values' learning, Okon and Anderson in Mezieobi (2019 p.12) posited that in social studies "more emphasis...(is) placed on the affective domain of education...(than in) cognitive and psychomotor domains...(the latter of which have) meaning and significance only within the context of the affective".

If social studies education is saddled with positive values' acquisition guidance, to simply with a wave of the hand infuse social studies in the Religion and National Values Basic Education Curriculum, smacks of not only 'misprioritization' but lack of understanding of the place of social studies education in positive values' formation impacting on peace entrenchment which should not be toyed with or paid lip service to.

Without mincing words, social studies education has all it takes to guide affective or values' learning, including positive peace-oriented values to the desired station. Recall that it is the professional social studies practitioners that are equipped with the positive values' acquisition guidance package or approaches. It is practically or realistically impossible to 'teach values to another person'. But as Professor Okam (1998 p.97) aptly noted "...we (social studies practitioners, qualified and up-to-dated social studies teachers wallowing in professional currency) merely set the stage and...act as...catalyst..." to one's valuing or values' choice.

Social studies professional pundits are agreed that the crux of social studies education professionally is focused on man in his environments. In this man's symbiotic relationships with his environments, social studies as a socializer



of man to his environments sensitizes man to the realities of his environment including the peace-building index or the surreal portrait of peace in his social environment. This social studies motored man's sensitization to man's environments prepares man to identify and "conquer knotty problems and challenges in his environments (posed by peace related problems) and make the most of his environments (in the area of peace-driven social stability) for his effective social living and improved (peaceful) life conditions" (Mezieobi and Mezieobi, 2017 p.23).

Some pedagogic or teaching methodologies with specific reference to teaching methods, teaching techniques and community resource persons lend themselves to the acquisition of behaviours, attitudes, skills that make peaceful circumstances possible as well as teach 'peace'. Some of the social studies teaching methods that help in the acquisition of peace tenets include values' clarifying method, collaborative or cooperative method, dramatization, discussion, simulation, expository, source methods and problem-solving method. The social studies teaching techniques that are amenable for peace education teaching include demonstration, story telling, illustration, resource persons, field trip, interview and role-playing techniques (Mezieobi; Mezieobi; Mezieobi and Mezieobi, 2017).

In social studies education, as a field of study, the communities that house the schools and classrooms in which social studies is taught and learned cannot be relegated because of the abundant community resources that are germane to the effective teaching of social studies. The said communities are the social studies open classrooms or classrooms without walls or social studies out-of-school laboratories where our student clientele are made to come in contact with real life situations.

Besides resource persons from the communities that can be invited to give reasoned talks on peace entrepreneurship in the schools, they can also be accessed through digital field trip or electronic field-trips. Resources places, legal and religious institutions where conflict-resolution geared at peaceful settlement of disputes and the preaching of positive peace respectively, can be accessed, are available in the communities.

Consequent on social dynamics and the fact that social studies education must keep pace with contemporary trends in the society, professional social studies practitioners are always on their professional toes to keep abreast of current trends such as 'what's up' in relation to peace education and peace-building, among other evolving contemporary issues and challenges. Constant update of the social studies teacher with contemporary trends in peace making, peace culture sustenance and peace-building – "a process that encourages...and keeps afloat (positive) peace and...prevent(s) the reoccurrence of conflict by dealing with the root causes and effect(s) of such conflict..." (Anike-Nweze, 2009 p.39) that tears peace apart, shields the current social studies teacher from obsolescence.

Nigeria as a sovereign geo-polity, through her National Policy on Education (2014 p.8) endorses "the incultation of the right type of values (including durable peace)...for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society". The curricula of social studies at all levels of the Nigerian Educational strata projects this admonition. Of all the subjects in the school curricula, social studies not only beams its teaching emphasis on positive values' acquisition, such as durable peace entrepreneurship since it is values' laden, it (social studies) also has dominant command or exclusive preserve of approaches in such values' evaluation. Ezeigbo



(2013) correctly pointed these approaches as the use of questionnaire, evaluation in the classroom after a lesson, evaluation through classroom observation and their recording instruments, such as checklist, anecdotes, rating scale, evaluation through other self-report instruments i.e. interest inventory, sentence completion and social distance scale, evaluation through out-door observation and the use of student-teacher conference.

Besides, in evaluating values in peace driven education, social studies professionals are the only school personnel that are at professional grips as to how to counteract the bottlenecks associated with values' evaluation.

Evaluation in social studies including peace education is not just limited to instructional evaluation. Nonetheless, a social studies teacher in his indulgence in self-evaluation of his performance in facilitating the inculcating of values of peace tenets will know whether or not he or she has done well or not, and the direction to go for self-improvement that will enhance his teaching of peace education curriculum and more.

### Conclusion

For there to be any concerted efforts at peace-building in the real sense of the compound word, peace must exist as preponderating peace culture situation. This paper hazarded a good number of peace-building conditionalities with a focus on Nigeria and also insightfully articulated the inevitable place of social studies education in the striving to entrench durable peace.

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The image is a night photograph of a bright star or light source, possibly a star or a distant galaxy, positioned on the horizon. The light source is surrounded by a complex pattern of diffraction spikes, creating a starburst effect. The background is a deep, dark blue, suggesting a night sky or a dark sea. A bright, horizontal band of light, likely the horizon or a reflection, is visible. The overall scene is dark and atmospheric. A red banner is overlaid at the bottom of the image, containing the ISSN number.

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