

SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION AND SELF-RELIANCE IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

*The paper examines the concept of social science education as a distinct study area of knowledge. It equally identifies and highlights the major areas of social science education and discusses their general objectives for societal development. Specifically, it addresses the question of self-reliance among graduates of tertiary institutions especially university graduates. Reasonably, it was discovered that social science education graduates appears to be non-conformists to agreed value as the empirical aspects of the study suggest. Suggestions for improving the teaching of social science education teaching were made. Some of the suggestions include the improvement of the quality of basic education, enhancement of the remuneration of teachers at all levels of education, teaching to be targeted at career relevance and the employability of graduates as well as the implementation of quality assurance measures for the maintenance of standards.*

**Introduction**

Productivity and employment are issues that are central to the social and economic life of every society or nation. It has thus been argued that continuous improvement in productivity is the surest way to dismantling the vicious circle of the endemic nature of poverty in developing countries of the world. Growth in productivity provides a significant basis for adequate supply of goods and services thereby improving the welfare of the people and enhancing social progress. Thus, without growth in productivity, Demburg (1985) in Obadan and Ayodele (1999) stated:

*Without it, there would be no growth in per capital income and inflation control would be the more difficult (p.1)*

In fact, it is necessary to observe that continuous enhancement of productivity has been very central to the brilliant performance of the Asian Tigers in recent years (Ayodele, 1999). Any country with productivity rate is often characterized by a very high capacity utilization (optimal use of resources), high standard of living and indeed low rate of unemployment. Unemployment on the other-hand

has been characterized as one of the serious impediments to social and economic progress. Apart from representing a colossal waste of a country's manpower resources, it generates welfare loss in terms of lower output thereby leading to lower income and poor well-being.

Unemployment appears to be a very serious issue in developing societies particularly in Africa. Rama (1998) examined and discovered its prevalence in Africa while Oladeji (1994) and Umo (1996) saw its high rate in Nigeria. A sample of the profile of these discoveries is presented below

**Table 1: Unemployment by Age Groups in Nigeria (1993 – 1997) on Percentage Rates**

Period (Year)	15-24	25-44	45-49	60-64
1993	69.0	25.2	5.8	-
1994	70.4	21.0	8.6	-
1995	57.5	28.7	13.8	-
1996	42.9	46.0	11.1	-
1997	41.6	49.7	6.0	2.7
Amount Average (1993 - 1997)	56.3	34.1	9.1	-

**Source:** Compiled and calculated by FOS: Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1998

In table 1, it shows that 56.3% of youths in the age bracket of 15-24 during the period under review were actually unemployed. Equally, 34.1% were unemployed in the age bracket of 25-44 during the reviewed period.

and raise productivity in nation of the world has received prominence in local and international discourse. One significant and indeed critical institution of society that greatly determines high productivity and employment rates is education.

The need therefore to ameliorate the negative effects of unemployment

Education through the school system sets the parameters for the

determination of society or terms of its survival, development and sustenance. The survival and advancement of any society is critically predicated on its state of independence and self-sufficiency, the state of a society's independent and self-sufficiency is based on how its individual members are independent or self-reliant.

My task today is essentially to examine the place of Social science Education as a stimulus for the enhancement of self-reliance in Nigeria.

### **The Concept of social Science Education**

Social Science involves the study of people and the interactions with each other, with their social and political institutions and with their environments. It includes a broad range of courses and subjects. The branches include; History, Economics, Government, Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, Political science, Cultural Studies, Criminology, Linguistics, Mass Communication and Development studies.

Flyvbery (2001), stated that, Social Science could also be conceived as the field of Scholarship that studies society. Social Science is commonly used as an umbrella term to refer to a

plurality of fields outside of the natural sciences. These are Anthropology, Archeology, Business Administration, Criminology, Economics Education, Geography, Linguistics, Political Science, Sociology, International Relations, Communication and in some contexts, History, Law and Psychology. The term may be used however, in the specific contexts of referring to the original science of society established in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Sociology. Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber are typically acknowledge as the principal architects of modern Social Science in the contexts of this definition. Positivist Social Scientists use methods that resemble those of the natural science as tools for understanding society and so define Social Science in its stricter modern sense.

To the contrary, the interpretation Social Science may use social critique or symbolic interpretation rather than constructing empirical falsifiable theories, and this treat social science in its broader sense. However, in modern academic practice, it is more profitable to use the quantitative and qualitative approaches in the study of social science education.

Broadly, students of Social Science Studies are expected to demonstrate

both breath and depth of understanding in the academic disciplines that make up the Social Science. Social Science courses are taught to help individuals in the understanding of human behaviour and to help people become responsible citizens that are committed to the value of a democracy.

Social Science observe, describe and explain society, thus the discipline used scientific methods of investigations. Social Science graduates are therefore prepared for the understanding and dealing with society. The Social Science Education Curriculum goals also teach young people to help them build thinking skills and knowledge. It help them learn more about the world and provides understanding of different types of culture and humanity as a whole. Furthermore, it should help students understand and take on the responsibilities of being good citizen while preparing them for several career paths and also help them to develop the ability to make informed decisions. The wholesome curriculum package of Social Science Education for its students essentially comprises Economic, Social and Political preparations to meaningful living in society. For instance, the expectation of the school system by society and particularly of Higher Education in

Nigeria is that it should adequately prepare the individual to be self-reliant economically, politically and socially.

However, compelling demands exist for Nigeria to re-examine the benchmarks of its Higher Education quality. The most important reason is that Higher Education is crucial for economic growth. Reasons that can be adduced to this are that, highly skilled workers drive technological innovations through research which in turn lead to larger social productivity increases and also that with a highly skilled labour force, it is better chanced to grow than one with a lesser skilled workforce. The reason is that skilled workers are more able to learn by doing and therefore to adopt new skills and technologies that are crucial for productivity increases.

### **The concept of Self-reliance**

Self-reliance is synonymous with self-Sufficiency. It means doing things for one-self rather than having things done for us. It however does not mean that an individual does not need other in his life. It only means that, the kind of assistance required is to help ensure it places him in position to better care for himself. Self-reliance build the kind of character needed to live both

independently and freely in community with others.

Self-reliance can also be considered as the ability of an individual as well as his capacity to depend on his own effort to earn a living. The concept implies independence in one's thought, decision-making and problem-solving. Thus, the concept advocates total independent on one's self for all his needs in life. Advocates of self-reliance or self-sufficiency argue that unnecessary dependency dulls character of an individual and in community destroys personal freedom and consequently creates social dysfunctions.

Self-reliance can be institutionally or individualistically applied within contextual understanding. For instance, in the East Africa country of Tanzania, the strategy of "Ujamaa" is used to achieve self-reliance either by an individual or by an institution but centrally focused on development through one's own effort. In Kenya, the concept of "Harambe" is often taught, encouraged and used. It is self-reliance through institutional process where collective effort is agitated for the purpose of development. In Zambia, "Humanism" which stresses the use of human beings to bring about development is encouraged. The concept of "Humanism" is in

essence self-reliance with similar characteristics.

### **SOME TRENDS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION AND THE STATUS OF SELF-RELIANCE AMONG GRADUATES OF HIGHER INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA**

In reasonable thinking, when the principle of self-reliance is considered, individuals are expected to exhibit relative independence or self-sufficiency in critical aspects of life. Thus, self-reliance as a broad-based concept relating to individuals and institutions is propelled by diverse parameters. Consequently, Social Science Education is not an important parameter but indeed a critical aspect that engineers an individual or institutional self-reliance. It prepares an individual to become a responsible citizen. It helps him to build thinking skills and acquire relevant knowledge for useful living in society. Social Science Education equally prepares individuals for several career paths as well as the development of abilities to take informed decisions. It also helps individuals in the understanding of human behaviour.

An array of empirical evidences is thus presented to serve as "Looking glass" of role of Social Science Education in Nigeria the first index

of Social Science in the consideration of self-reliance is the economic determinant. The evidence is the unemployment rate of

individual by levels of education in Nigeria I some selected Metropolitan areas.

**Table 2: Percentage Unemployment Rate by Level of Education**

<b>Metropolitan Area</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Polytechnic/ Monotechnic</b>	<b>University (1<sup>st</sup> Degree)</b>	<b>Overall Unemployment Rate</b>
Aba	15.2	30.0	26.3	16.2
Abuja	29.9	23.2	16.0	19.2
Ibadan	22.4	24.0	19.0	17.5
Jos	26.0	16.0	5.0	16.3
Kano	15.3	21.0	0.0	10.7
Lagos City	16.5	19.5	29.4	12.9
Maiduguri	13.6	18.0	13.3	8.9
Port Harcourt	48.5	28.4	29.1	34.7

**Source:** Obtained from an unpublished Labour Market survey in 1998

From the information in table 2, it is obvious that graduates of Universities faced employment challenges in the under reference. Figures in the eight Metropolitan Areas in Nigeria indeed confirm this position. Most of the graduates

depended on the scarce public service jobs that existed as at then.

A follow up in 1999 to confirm the quest for public service employment and placements gave the following details:

**Table 3: Graduate Job Application Evidences and Hiring into Federal Civil Services of Nigeria**

Year	No. of Applicants	No. of Graduates (Including that Degree)	No. of Officers Absorption	Percentage with Post-Graduate
1993	9,650	-	2,459	25.5
1994	8,694	5,673	617	71
1995	14,312	9,398	756	5.3
1996	10,250	7,220	329	3.2
1997	9,441	6,390	179	1.9
1998	8,172	5,139	138	1.6
1999	63,414	-	226	0.35
2000	50,000(+)	-	3,301	6.6

**Source:** Federal Civil Service Commission (FGN, 1999).

In table 3, the figures show the emerged trend of graduate intake into the public sector which is a strong indicator of graduate unemployment prospects.

The figures should not be mistaken for all available Federal Civil Service positions. Instead, they represent only Grade levels 08 and above which constitute the Senior Positions are University graduates. When the low percentage absorption capacity rate in the table 2, it meant that if the Federal Civil Service Commission had been the only major

employer of graduates, then emerging trends in public services recruitment showed very glooming employment prospects for University graduates.

Information obtained at the NDE office in Jos in 2011 which is a decade after the one observed in 1999 appear to give significant indications that what was experienced in terms of graduate unemployment in Nigeria has in fact not been reversed as confirmed by the figures in table 3 below:

**Table 4: Percentages Social Science Graduate Unemployment Rates from 2007 – 2011 in Plateau State**

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Unemployed Graduates</b>	<b>Percentage Graduate Unemployment Rate</b>
2007	48	20.6
2008	55	23.6
2009	54	23.2
2010	51	21.8
2011	25	10.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>100(approx)</b>

**Source:** Statistics Office NDE, Jos – Plateau State (May, 2011).

The figures in table 4 present a graphic picture of the prevalence of graduate unemployment amount Social Science graduates of Nigerian Universities. Specific profiles of these graduates further demonstrated that quite a number of them. Had roamed about seeking for white collar jobs and failed before eventually coming to register with the NDE in the years indicated.

The scenario presented here draws significant of worry while giving the impression that quite a number of graduate of the Social Science Education may be ill-equipped to actually be creative enough. If

indeed Nigeria has changed in its economic, social \* and political situations, its graduate population more than the non-graduate should be reliant to a significant level.

Beyond the economic dimension giving the index of employment and productivity, it was necessary to investigate how the Social Science graduate population is responsive to issue of citizenship and their abilities in making informed decisions. Social Science Education teaches students to imbibe relevant values of society and operate within acceptable norms. These were thus, investigated as follows:



**Table 5: Percentages Social Science Graduates Road Traffic Violation Rates.**

Category of Offences	Period	Number	Percentage Rate
Seat Belt Violation (SBV)	Jan-May, 2010	12	35.3
Fire Extinguisher Violation (FEV)	√	03	8.8
Obstructing Marshal on Duty (OMD)	√	01	2.9
Driving With worn-out Tyres (DWWT)	√	01	2.9
Light Caution Sign Violation (LCV)	June-Dec., 2010	01	2.9
Seat Belt Violation (SBV)	√	13	38.2
Riding Machine without Helmet (RMWH)	√	02	5.9
Number Plate Violation (NPV)	√	01	2.9
Seat Belt Violation (SBV)	Jan-May, 2011	08	23.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>100 (Approx)</b>

**Source:** Directorate of Operations, FRSC Office, Jos (May, 2011).

In table 5, the survey was intended to demonstrate how Social Science graduates conformed to expected

standards of behaviour to indicate normative status rating. Though, generally the occurrence levels of

violations were low, the picture showed that indeed some of the graduate were non-conformists to agreed norms of society. 35.3% of the total of 34 in Jan-May 2010, 38.2% of the same total of 34 in June-December 2010 and 8% of the same total of 34 in Jan-May 2011 actually were fined for Seat Violation offences. If our Social Science graduates have been adequately trained to take informed decisions why have these few not taken such informed decisions even on matters relating to their personal safety on the road?

Another dimension was pursued using the survey methods and this was related to Social Science graduates divorce/separation/child abandoned rates. The investigation was carried out in three Courts in the Jos Metropolis. They are High Court 1, High Court 4 and Magistrate Court West Mines. The purpose was to find out whether graduates of Social Science Education were involved in these cases to demonstrate that they were non-conformists. The following results were obtained:

**Table 6: Percentages Social Science Graduate Unemployment Rates from 2007 – 2011 in Plateau State**

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Unemployed Graduates</b>	<b>Percentage Graduate Unemployment Rate</b>
Secondary	23	56.1
Diploma/NCE	10	24.4
Graduate (Including Masters/Ph. D)	08	19.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100(approx)</b>

Source: High Court 1 and 4 and Magistrate Court West of Mines Jos (May, 2011).

The survey was conducted in three courts given the results in table 6. Assuming the study was carried out in all Courts and Social Welfare Offices in Plateau State, it would have given a broader understanding

of the issues being considered. In investigating this issue, the indices of religion, tribe and social status were left out. Thus, only the index of academic qualification was considered.

The figures in table 6 showed that the incident of divorce/separation were more prevalent among the less academically qualified as, 2 (56.3%) were holders of Diploma and Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE). 8 (19.5%) was recorded for graduates of Social Science Education. Some of the recorded cases involving Social Science graduate were characterized by children neglect and abandonment. Poor response to the needs for feeding and school fees were noted in some of the cases. However, if these characteristics were typical of divorce/separation cases involving those in the categories of Secondary and Diploma/NCE, it could have expected that, it should not be the case with those in the third category of the table 5. those in the third category who are holders of higher degrees better off economically and should respond positively to the needs for feeding and school requirements of children even where divorce/separation have been secured in legitimate ways.

On all fronts of these issues, the social science graduates involved in these cases were non-conformists. They had broken the bonds of the union of marriage based on mutual agreements predicated on acceptable values of society. If these individuals are social scientists and indeed students of society, why have they

failed to copy such knowledge acquired? They could not rely on themselves to justify their being self-reliant in spite of their educational breath and depth.

### **OTHER OBSERVED ISSUES THAT UNDERSCORE THE STATUS OF SELF-RELIANCE IN THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY BUT NOT EMPIRICALLY TREATED**

Curiosity and deliberate observation of the system referred to as Nigeria has revealed a significant quantum of the occurrence of the prevalence of poor social, economic and political conditions. These have appeared to be reasonable indicators of the status of institutional and individual self-reliance in Nigeria. Indeed, individual self-reliance or self sufficiency gives rise to institutional self-reliance. Some of the indicators that relate to value-orientation and attitude formation of society are:

- **Corruption:** Transparency international has placed Nigeria in the list of the most corrupt nations of the world. The question to ask quickly is, why the existence of bribery and corruption in Nigeria at such an alarming rate? It also exists in the Educational Institutions in

Nigeria even at significant levels.

- **Examination Malpractices:**

At the moment there is the insinuation that some parents hire people to sit for public examination (JAMB, SSCE and NECO) for their children. In most cases these parents are sufficiently well schooled but are thus desperate to maintain the existing status quo of social class structure. They often pursue the admission of their children or wards into higher institutions at all cost while compromising merit consideration. The current waves of examination malpractice are overwhelming in our tertiary institutions where marks are sometimes awarded without corresponding justifications.

- **Manipulations of political process:**

The quest for leadership has become an act of desperation among the highly educated in the Nigerian in the Nigerian society. Recent happenings in the Nigerian Electoral process have left much to be desired of our nation as an emerging democracy. Political opponents

occasioned by high rates of political rivalry, ballot-box snatching and figures falsification.

- **Prostitution:**

This appears to be prevalent even among tertiary education graduates. The practice is usually for the exchange of favours either in economic, social or political terms where the individual is unable to compete and obtain such on the platter of merit. Currently, young Nigerian girls are involved in all form of prostitution in and outside Nigeria. The question ask is if these young girls were adequately trained to be self-sufficient and to take informed decisions at least for the sake of decency, would they be involved in these dishonourable acts? Another dimension is that the occurrence may be predicated on greedy desires where the individual has the basic need but requires more and cannot legitimate do so.

- **Sorting in Nigerian Institutions of Learning:**

These relate to the offer of money and other inducements to Lectures for higher school grades. Other aspects include: Sale of

handouts by Lecturers to students and sale of 'yahoo-yahoo' publications (cut and paste publications) by lecturers (Ada, 2011). Are these evidences actually indicators of the lack of competence on the part of Lecturers?

These five issues though not empirically, verified but observed have potent influences on the image of the nation. Their prevalence is indeed below the self-sufficiency level thus meaning that it lacks basic skills and competencies for self-reliance. Where these propositions are upheld, it means that the conditions that support self-sufficiency ought to be queried. Thus, the education system of Nigeria as a critical tool for purpose needs to be repositioned.

### **Suggestions for the Improvement of Social Science Education for the Enhancement of Self-Sufficiency Status among Nigeria Graduates**

Obviously, there is a significant mismatch between Social Science Education goal and the Self-Sufficiency Status of its graduates in Nigeria. Records of the cited empirical verifications and observed facts alluded to in the preceding pages do justify my conclusion in this manner. No wonder, the

expected advancement of our nation has indeed been hampered and slowed.

Consequently, the following observations are made with corresponding suggestions:

- The base-level training system is quite weak. Candidates who come up for admission into tertiary institutions emerge from very weak primary and secondary schools where teaching and learning still based on out-dated practices. For instance, child centred learning is not practiced and context based learning through problem solving approaches are hardly adopted. It is suggested that these categories of teachers be trained in the use of more profitable pedagogy.
- Teacher remuneration at all levels of education is still low as compared to other professions. In the primary school system in Nigeria, some categories of teachers still earn less than ten thousand Naira (₦10,000) monthly as salary. A Nigerian Professor currently has a basic monthly only (₦500,000) with an annual basic of about ₦6,000,000.00 while a Nigerian Senator

earns a monthly basic salary of ₦3,000,000.00 with an annual basic of ₦36,000,000:00. The National Assembly Members earns ₦21,000,000.00 per annum and these are apart from allowances. A Local Government Supervisory Councillor's monthly salary is ₦809,549. These salary profiles preset sharp discrepancies in the wages of teachers compared with others. These are likely to affect the motivation of teachers which is an essential tool for efficiency and productivity. it is thus recommended that improvement be effected in the salary package of teachers so as to raise their motivation levels

#### **High intake levels in Tertiary Institutions.**

Increase in population rates has affected the intake levels in higher institutions in Nigeria. In most cases, entry requirements are compromised to accommodate some preferred weak candidates whereby over blotting admission targets. The NUC recommended ratio of 1 Lecturer. 30 students in the social science is never

adhered to. This has led to the excess workload condition experienced in most Universities in Nigeria where Lecturers teach large population of students over the recommended. These Lecturers are never even paid for these excess workload carried. Their efficiencies are thus weakened leading to low productivity.

- It is thus suggested that primordial causes for these occurrences should be addressed at least in streamlining admissions to be commensurate with existing facilities and personnel.
- Teaching in Social Science Education should be targeted at career relevance and the employability of graduates. The recorded high levels of unemployed graduates in Nigeria speak volume of their self-reliance status and the suitability of the skills acquired in school for independent living. Social Science courses should inculcate relevant skills in graduates for fitting into the workplace which require effective communication and presentation of ideas and arguments.

Employers in all field put in a high value on anyone can select from and analyze a large amount complex information and make logical and concise use of it. This patterns employment opportunities across the whole range of occupations in public, private and voluntary sectors.

- Quality Assurance of tertiary Institutions for the guarantee of high academic standard is weak. Much of the assurance for quality has been hinged on quantitative indicators rather than qualitative. It is suggested that an entire systemic adjustment be made to ensure qualitative assurance as against the quantitative which has been the emphasis.

- **Professionalization of the teaching job.** There appears to be a serious high concerning the expected understanding among the many lectures in Nigerian Universities to embrace the call the registration of all qualified teachers TRCN Act 31 of 1993. Many are unwilling to enrol for qualifying examinations that will prepare them for registration. They are

therefore teaching without basic pedagogical skills required for enhanced performance. Many engage I unethical practices that are inimical to the professional standards for teachers in Nigeria. The Nigerian Regulatory Agency for teachers which is the TRCN should put in place necessary mechanism to compel all that are engaged in teaching to obtain the basic teaching qualifications and then register.

The ICT literacy rate of teachers in Nigeria is still quite low and most Nigerian teachers and even many in higher institutions are yet to grasp the rudiment of information and communication technology. Where teachers who are the fulcrum of development in society tack basic knowledge in Computer, then we are lost as the present century is where information technology drive the pace of development Communication infrastructures like telephone, fax, E-mail and Computer networking most occupy the minds of teachers. Social Science teaching will certainly be enhanced for

self-reliance with increased knowledge in ICT.

## CONCLUSION

Quite a number of issues have been raised in the course of this discussion. They are indeed pertinent matters that exert that significant impact on the pace of development of our nation. It is thus necessary to re-examine all aspect that will fast tract our move to advancement. Thus, restructuring of the curriculum of Nigeria's Universities has long been overdue. For over twenty years, Universities have been churning out graduates who have neither entrepreneurial skills nor imbibed the sprit of self-reliance, resulting in mass unemployment among graduates. However, the employability of graduates is not the only measure of self-reliance or self-sufficiency as others may relate to political and social dimensions. The social science education curriculum is expected to be wholesome enough in equipping the graduate with all relevant skills and knowledge for useful living in society. It was on these

that attempts were made in this word to ascertain beyond the economic measure of self-reliance to cover other aspects to do with values and even emotional considerations.

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