

Introducing the Class

Words from the Vice Chancellor's inaugural statement were at the back of my mind when I encountered my first set of students. The VC's had noted that security study has never been taught in this University. This was the first time it would be taught and at the postgraduate level. I added that as far as my knowledge of Nigerian universities was concerned, security was not a course of study in any public university. It was a new programme altogether and the character of the persons – resource persons and students – demonstrated this clearly.

I had designed a form to take down the data of my students in order to put me in the clear picture of their background. In my study of the data generated, the students were from different educational fields spanning the sciences, humanities and social sciences. Their work experiences were diverse as well. There was not a single person with a degree or higher degree in security studies. A few of them had postgraduate level degrees in strategic studies. This they equated to security studies. It was not security studies. At best, it was military studies. At worst, military studies embedded aspect of security studies appropriated by the military.

Those from the military and paramilitary services thought they had an edge over others. The reason for this was that they were already practicing security. They were in school to study the theoretical aspect. This was my line of thinking. Quite a handful of people from the military and law enforcement did apply to study security. There was equal number if not more from other services and interested Nigerians.

I was allocated two classes to teach. One was a PhD and the other was MSc. The PhD class was SSS 912 Security and Strategic Theories. The MSc class was SSS 812 Fundamentals of Security and Strategic Studies. The first class was the MSc. I had prepared course outlines for the courses.

With the knowledge from the data I collected I proceeded to administer a test to the class. I announced to the class that they were going to write a test. It came as a surprise. It was intended to test a theory – my theory. It was intended to gauge what they thought they knew about security. The question was: What is security? How do you know what you know about security? I gave the class 40 minutes for the test. When it was over I collected the scripts.

It was my turn to introduce the class. I gave out the course outline containing a breakdown of topics, the philosophy of the course and class rules. I drew attention to the novelty of security studies, the target of the programme and the constraints seen and unseen before students and resource persons. I emphasised that one of the constraints was

time and material. The resource person and students had plenty to accomplish in the little time they have. This was the pattern in both the MSc and PhD classes. I informed my students that I will present my take on the test in the next class.

How did the first two encounters go? There were two perspectives here -my perspective and those of the students. I can speak for me. The class went well. I did observe that there was suspended anticipation on the side of students and the resource person. On my side I was eager to read the scripts and know the result of the theory - my theory.

It was a theory I had and tested on the undergraduate students of the Department of History. Would the result be the same with the postgraduate students of security and strategic studies? Postgraduate students who claimed interest and who had certain untried and untested assumptions of security themselves?