

**DEVELOPING RIGHT CULTURAL VALUES AMONG
NIGERIAN YOUTHS: IMPLICATION
FOR SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION**

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Abstract

The paper recognizes the great potentials of Social Studies education in ameliorating the problems of dishonesty, corruption and intolerance. It considers the view that the various cultures in Nigeria tend to produce different values which negate the principle of national unity. The paper observes that due to some hiccups such as the obsolete nature of some of its methods of teaching and the intervening impact of the home, Social Studies has not lived up to its bidding.

Introduction

Social Studies as a school subject tries to teach children the total summation of all experiences within their environment, which they need to live in the world. The subject is particular in developing their appropriate skills and attitudes which will make them to become activists and contributors to the community. The children need to know their society, its nature, its problems and its prospects. Certain peculiar materials are found in Social Studies, which constitute its major characteristics. One, the focus of the subject is the study of man. It is not a study of animals, plants, and organic or non-organic materials. The interest of the subject is on how human beings behave

(that is, the reaction of an individual or individuals in any situation), what man believes (values) that is, ideas, which a society cherishes and seeks to achieve, how man's living together is safeguarded, and how man's problem of survival is being tackled. Therefore, all Social Studies programmes emphasize the relationship human being have with their physical and social world.

Social Studies is also perceived to be society-oriented and culture-bound. This means that the material and knowledge gained in the subject is first and foremost those that relate to, relevant to and useful to a particular society and a particular culture. Hence, we do not have such programmes or syllabuses like Social Studies of West Africa, or Social Studies of Africa. Rather, an individual country develops her own Social Studies. We have the Nigerian Social Studies programme which is developed and implemented only in Nigeria (Ogundare, 2004). The subject, Social Studies however takes it as problematic the issue of bringing up everybody with approved social responsibility. In other words bringing people up as purposeful, useful and functional members of the society should not be left to mere chance or accidental occasions. In short, children have to be educated formally and systematically on this. How this is to be done is the business and soul aim of Social Studies.

Man is seen as the central figure and at center of discourse in Social Studies and as such, everything about man especially as it relates to his existence and survival cannot be over emphasized. The corollary of this is the issue of culture which in a blanket way is regarded as 'a way of life' hence, a social man cannot be studied and understood in a vacuum of his culture and this may not be unconnected with the reason why man's culture is pertinent in Social Studies and it is defined as the 'way of life, the practice of living effectively and efficiently in the society' (Ogundare, 2001 cited by Oladiti & Kamarise, 2009). All these explain the place of culture in the life of the people and society at large; and by implication, culture is not static but dynamic. It changes regularly especially, positive change which has to do with attitude and values of the people which is enshrined in the culture of such people. This can only thrive in the soil of culture; hence, it becomes imperative to take a snap at cultural issues as it affects the life of the people in such a discourse of this nature.

As a plural society, many forces tend to pull the Nigeria state. Nigeria's plurality can be seen in terms of the various ethnic groups, cultures, religions, and languages. Many Nigerians would first and foremost identify themselves with their ethnic groups before the nation. The responsibility of any good government is to promote good cultural values. In the pre-colonial period, the various Nigerian groups bequeathed worthwhile cultural values to their societies. This is evidenced in the stable political order they maintained (Azide, 2007). In the present Nigerian situation, it appears that the cultural values transmitted to the society are the culture of violence, corruption, immorality, dishonesty, conflicts etc. These are certainly not worthwhile values that can move any nation forward.

Formal and non-formal educational measures have been put in place to remediate these problems. Among them is Social Studies education which was conceived as a subject to help heal the wounds of civil war, ethnicity, and to promote national unity, co-operation, good citizenship etc. using the instrumentality of the school. (Ezegbe, 1988, cited by Azide, 2007). Perhaps it is against this backdrop that some pertinent questions come to fore. These among others are, has Social Studies education played its proper role in inculcating cultural values in Nigerian youths? Is the subject taught in the schools in such a way as to fulfill its goals? This paper explores the cultural and social problems in Nigeria and maintains that Social Studies education, if well handled in the schools will help in the inculcation of good cultural values in Nigeria youths.

Concept Clarification

Culture is a universal and at the same time a relative concept which entails all the traits characterizing a particular society and which are consciously or unconsciously acquired by the members of the society. Culture is universal because there is no society without culture. On the other hand, culture is relative because it differs from one society to the other, there are no two societies with the same culture (Falade, 1994). Culture refers to a configuration of learned and shared patterns of behavior and of understanding concerning the meaning and value of things, ideas, emotions and actions. According to Odetola and Ademola (1986), this configuration of patterns and understanding

arises from the form of language communication within a social group and helps an individual to adapt to his physical environment, his biological nature and group life. Culture enables every society to have its own unique identity and this makes it easy to differentiate between one society or the other. For instance, in Nigeria, the easiest way of identifying an Hausa, Yoruba or Ibo man is by the cultural traits like language, dressing etc.

Otite and Oginwo (1979) defined culture as “the complex whole of man’s acquisitions of knowledge moral, beliefs, art, custom, technology, which are transmitted from generation to generation”. Similarly, UNESCO (2000) as cited by Azide (2007) defines it as:

The set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and Emotional features of society or a social group and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, life styles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

In his perspective, Ogunbameru (2006) explained that culture is derived from three elements: values, norms and artifacts. Values are ideas about what in life is important. They guide the rest of culture. Norms are expectations of how people will behave in different situations. Each culture has different methods called sanctions for enforcing its norms. Sanctions vary with the importance of the norm; norm that a society enforces formally are called laws. Artifacts are materially observable things used by a people. They are derived from a people’s values and norms.

Cultural values are also seen as those worthwhile and acceptable aspects of non-material culture of a people which help in moulding the character of the people. Cultural values are the bedrock of the society. The values held in the society shape the behavior of the people. These values, because they are good, are transmitted from generation to generation (Nwuzor,2002). In line with the submission of Azide (2007) as an instance, in the muslim areas of northern Nigeria, it is part of their values to respect political authorities due to the centralized political structure of the Sokoto caliphate on the one hand, and the influence of Islamic culture on the other hand. In the same vein, in

Western Nigeria, traditional political authorities are highly revered in keeping with the Yoruba values of obeisance and respect to the oba and elders.

There are essentially different patterns of cultural values in Nigeria. This is because Nigeria is a culturally diverse country. As a nation, the cultural values that need to be expressed are patriotism, hardwork, respect for elders and constituted authority and respect for the right of every Nigerian to live. Njoku (2004) believes that cultural values transmitted to the youths in modern Nigerian leaves much to be desired. The way and manner public officials live and embezzle money most of which are banked overseas does not promote patriotism and hard work. It appears that what the youth learn is mainly the negative side of cultural values.

The nature of socialization is at the core of the social problems in Nigeria vis-à-vis cultural values. Obi (2006) sees socialization from two perspectives: that of the society, and the individual. From the perspective of the society, socialization is viewed as the process of fitting new persons into an organized way of life in an established cultural tradition. On the perspective of the individual, socialization is the process by which a human being acquires a self and develops personality. It is on the perspective of the society that is more relevant in this paper.

Education is an investment in human resources and its end result is the improvement of the life of an individual and the society in general. It is therefore, imperative that education should incorporate the culture and values of the society/community. The society must also help its young people to inculcate values through learning processes which reflect a pattern of living represented in the society. All that it needed is good citizenship training which makes the individual a successful citizen in the society.

The Role of Social Studies in Inculcating Right Cultural Values

In Nigeria, Social Studies is considered to be one of the areas of study through which some of the national objectives on education can

be achieved. In both primary and secondary school, Social Studies is hoped to develop in student positive attitude of togetherness, comradeship, cooperation towards a healthy nation, the inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness and justice at work and play as one's contribution to the development of the nation.

One may wish to ask if Social Studies education has the capacity of inculcating cultural values in pupils and students. If the answer is in the affirmative, the next question could be, has the subject done that in Nigeria? The goals of Social Studies took root from the National Policy on Education (2004). The following educational goals are contained in the document:

- i. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- ii. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- iii. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- iv. The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society.

It is based on the above goals that the philosophy of Social Studies was derived as Okobia (1984), Ezegbe (1988), and Mezieobi (1992) have shown. Primary attention of Social Studies is on man's social, political, economic and cultural activities in the past, present and emerging future as well as in places near and far away (Ogundare, 2004). The overall aim of Social Studies education is to make children become patriotic, socially responsible, and good citizens by understanding the social milieu they are operating from. Some values that Social Studies need to inculcate in children according to Orakwe (2000) include an appreciation of the diversity of Nigeria, positive attitude to citizenship, entrepreneurship, positive thinking, cooperation and honesty. Similarly, Alaezi (1991) observed that the essence of Social Studies education is to inculcate core societal values in children. The principal task is to make the child to understand his/her society and relate the core values of the society to the Social Studies lessons. The

subject appears to have the capacity of inculcating cultural values. Ogunsanya (1984) opined that the attention given to the development of desirable attitudes and values in Social Studies education through the careful design of programme of related activities, deliberate and systematic teaching of these values makes the subject unique. It was further mentioned that its uniqueness in this case, places it in the best position to contribute much than all the other subjects added together to the achievement of an important national aim of education, which include "the inculcation of the right of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society".

One of the major problems in Nigeria is the negative and anti-social behavioural traits displayed by some Nigerian citizens. It is observed that intolerance, corruption, unfaithfulness and other bad behaviours common in Nigeria are the sources of the present unpleasant circumstances. Social Studies education intends to solve these problems by developing in the learners those personality traits that can help the nation to move forward. Falade (1999) argued that Social Studies is expected for displaying certain traits that are desirable in the society.

Despite the potential value of Social Studies education in inculcating cultural values in Nigeria, it appears that a lot more effort needs to be applied. Orakwue (2000), Nwuzor (2002), and Okafor (2005) all made allusion to the fall in social values in Nigeria. Corruption is the order of the day. Armed robbery is rampant, youth restiveness and incessant bombing attacks has become a national cankerworm. It is therefore a big challenge to Social Studies education and Social Studies teachers to stem the tide. It is under the purview of Social Studies education to impart effective learning which seems to be bane of Nigeria.

Orakwue (2000) is of the view that Social Studies teachers must keep abreast with new developments in the society. According to him the internet, satellite television, home video etc are negatively influencing Nigerian youths. These influences are bringing new values that are destroying the society. The Social Studies teacher must recognize this and develop new teaching strategies to reduce their negative effects. Udeinya (2005) quoted by Azide (2007) attributed the seeming difficulty of Social Studies education in inculcating social

and cultural values of the method adopted in teaching the subject. According to him many teachers of the subject are not experts and find it difficult to state instructional objectives that emphasize more of the affective domain of education. Since Social Studies is based mainly on the affective side of education, greater attention should be directed to it in the classroom. Ovakwue (2000) acknowledged that evaluation in the affective domain is difficult but achievable. To make it practical, students should be given assignments on issues that relate to the affective domain. Such assignments should focus on the social problems facing the country or the area the school is situated (Azide, 2007). For instance on prevailing Boko-Haram syndrome as well as Niger Delta crisis, the students can be asked to discuss with their parents the possible cause and solutions to the menace. These would then be discussed in the classroom. It will give the students opportunity of understanding and appreciating the problem. This would change their attitude and orientation towards the problems.

Conclusion

Perhaps Nigeria's greatest social problem is the internal violence plaguing the nation. Inter-ethnic fighting throughout the country, religious rioting and political confrontation between ethnic minorities and backers of oil companies often spark bloody confrontations. Poverty and lack of opportunity for many young people, especially in urban areas, have led to major crime. One can then draw inferences from the type of life Nigerians experienced few decades after Nigeria assumed the status of a 'Republic' in 1963. Things were not as worst as the present scenario in the country. Peace and tranquility were being enjoyed by Nigeria citizens at least in some manageable level. This may be corroborated by the submission of Amaechi Mbazulike, a frontline nationalists when granting interview with Tell Magazine in May, 2011 to mark Nigeria 50th Anniversary. He said and I quote: "we planned for and founded a country based on honesty, based on nationalist sacrifice, based on what one can contribute to make the nation great. But today, what we have is a country drifting and slipping into rottenness. There is so much corruption, stealing and general dishonesty, and insecurity; nothing is functioning in the country". A vast and diverse country like Nigeria needs to promote right cultural

values. This is because there are centrifugal forces always pulling the nation. The unity of the country must be integrated by exerting efforts towards reducing cultural differences between the ethnic groups. One sure way of realizing this is through Social Studies education.

Recommendations

It is hereby recommended that the home, apart from complementing efforts of other agents of socialization must play greater role in character training, acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills necessary to make the child fit in contributing positively to their well-being and those of others in the society. Secondly, teachers as trained professional adults should help to socialize the child in acceptable ways of life of the society. Unlike in the home, where the adults in socialization process are usually personally, emotionally attached with permanent relationships with the young ones, the school should provide opportunities for pupils to be less dependent on their adult kinsmen. This puts children to certain tasks and situations which make them to acquire certain social norms and values that are crucial to future participation in their society. Socio-cultural values such as honesty, diligence, cooperation, tolerance, and social responsibility are usually learnt by children at work and play in the school's formal social environment. Thirdly, qualified Social Studies teachers should be engaged in the schools. Instructional objectives in Social Studies lessons should emphasize more of the affective domain than the cognitive and psychomotor. This will ensure that the right cultural values are internalized by the students. Finally, the government, the home and the school needs to censor the contents of mass media that influence the lives of children negatively.

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