
PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN
NIGERIA THROUGH SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper is on the need to promote sustainable democratic values in Nigeria through Social Studies Education. The study is premised on the fact that democratic value in the Nigerian state is being eroded, thus the need for promoting and attaining it again via Social Studies education owing to the fact that the subject is capable of cultivating positive values in the citizenry. The study made use of secondary data in the review of related literature in line with the variable of the study. Investigation revealed that Social Studies by virtue of its robust social contents in its curriculum, is well placed to instill sound democratic values in the citizens. This is because its content teaches value and civic which are ingredients for a better and sustained democracy in any society. Also, investigation revealed that where there is no democratic values in the citizens, democracy in the society will be riddled with negative vices that are capable of casting shadow on the nation's democracy. In the light of this, the paper concluded that for Nigeria's democracy to be sustained overtime there is need for students to cultivate values that support democratic process. The paper recommended that

curriculum planners should ensure that Social Studies are taught to student at all levels of education as this will help enshrined in the citizens sound democratic values that will ensure that democracy in the country is sustained.

Keywords: Democracy, Social Studies, Values, Education

Introduction

Democracy has nearly become a household name in Nigeria but it is very clear that our understanding of the concept is very superficial. Democracy is rule by consent- the people's choice. This is why according to Ogunkunle as cited by the United State Institute of Peace USIP (2019), a military government, no matter its attractiveness and accomplishment cannot be a democracy. He opined further that a civilian government cannot assert to be a democracy unless it is produced and emerged truly as the choice of the people. Unarguably, the most fundamental precept of democracy according to Oluwagbohunmi (2017) is the freedom of citizens to elect their leaders. He noted that when this is denied, any nation that truly aspires to practice democracy must as a matter of urgency, revisit its value system to make sure that it is in line with the dictates of democracy. In other words, without these value system and conditions, the dream of free and fair elections will remain a mirage. A nation that is multi-lingual and multi-ethnic like Nigeria must be anxious with evolving a stable political system that could help in solving the fundamental problems of nation building. But after five decades of independence, political stability has proved obscure largely because of our inability to operate successfully constitutional and democratic government that could enhance the realization national growth and development. Thus, the need to tackle the nation's degrading value system via the school; hence the imperative of Social Studies education as a conduit. However, the importance of the school system in general and an organised curriculum like Social Studies in the political system is the only agent of socialization that can systematize its programme purposely to work in line with the objective of the existing political system. The teaching of democratic

values in Social Studies is part of the resolute effort at producing politically mature citizens who will be leaders via the school system and curriculum contents.

The nature of Social Studies as a social education and a programme of study inculcates in students the basic knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions the society regard as important concerning the relationships human beings have with each other as well as with their environment and country at large. From the foregoing statement, it can be inferred that Social Studies is a medium for passing on the knowledge developed by a society including the scholarly disciplines with the sole purpose of helping the young people understand and make informed decisions on a daily basis. Ibrahim (2018) opined that Social Studies as an organized and integrated study of human, the environment, both physical and social, emphasizing the cognition, functional skills and desirable attitudes, values and actions for the purpose of producing effective citizens. According to this definition, Social Studies consciously seeks to promote amongst others

Functional Skills: The acquisition of functional skills makes the client more productive and effective in managing the self and relating with the physical, social, economic and political environments. Here, also we may recognize communication, intellectual, manipulative, study and group-work skills. It equally seeks to promote desirable attitudes, values and actions. Such attitudes, values and actions are supportive of the development process. They include patriotism, honesty, probity, truthfulness, production, punctuality, peaceful coexistence, creativity, functional interdependence, wise use of scarce resources, and so on. Social Studies, thus, seeks to make the individual or client a well-rounded, efficient and effective citizens.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013) in its National Policy on Education from which Social Studies derives its objectives, aims amongst others at:

- the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;

- the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around.

It is important to note that the essence of Social Studies in Nigerian schools is not just to prepare the child for the society but also to make him or her to become relevant to himself/herself especially in the preparation for useful, self-reliant and enjoyable adult-life. It is these goals that make the subject essential in the school curriculum and relevant to sustaining democratic values in the country.

Obemeta as cited in Ibrahim (2018) stated that the major attraction of Social Studies is that it deals with human behaviour and the belief that the study can contribute significantly to changing the attitudes of the young and coming generation, thus creating an atmosphere for sustained growth and development. This is because every society is concerned, in part, with the behaviour of its members. Behaviour in this context entails what people think, feel, say, do, and so on. In this wise, behaviour refers to causes, results and consequences (Clark, 2018). Social Studies was evolved to address certain societal problems and not to produce experts in an economic profession. It also intends to bring about an all-round development of the individual in the society. This development, according to Rodney as cited in Clark (2018) implied increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being.' In the same vein, Ikwumelu as cited in Onuoha and Okam (2011) stated that the 'development expected here, can be viewed as a multi-dimensional process involving the reduction or eradication of inequality, absolute poverty, unemployment and slavery or apartheid, as well as institutional changes and economic growth.' These and others are the expectations and skills which Social Studies is called to achieve and are relevant to sustaining democratic values in the Nigerian state. In the light of the above, the following objectives guided this investigation;

- i. To examine how Social Studies Education enhance and promote sustainable democratic values.

- ii. To determine the problems of democratic governance in the country.
- iii. To find out how Social Studies education helps in inculcating democratic values to citizens

Social Studies Education and Sustenance of Democracy

Social Studies is concerned with three human relationships: human to own self; human to other humans; and human to the environment (Ajitoni, 2017). These relationships lead to the ultimate development of desirable socio-civic and personal behaviour. This was why Lee as cited in Clark (2018) observed that Social Studies deals with humankind's social, economic, and political behaviour, at any place where people live or have lived, now or in the past. As reported by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) as cited in Ajitoni (2017), no society will prosper unless its members behave in ways which advance its growth and development. As such, every society is concerned with the behaviour of its members; and these members are expected to act positively. By acting positively, we mean actions based on knowledge and judged as humane that is worthy of emulation (Lee, 2006). Each person's behaviour tends to reflect the values, ideals, beliefs, and attitudes which such an individual accepts. The imperative here is that these behaviour tends to guides action of the individual in the society. Thus, when not positively directed, it causes chaos in the society, hence jettisoning democratic values and democracy in general.

In the view of Ajitoni (2017) values entails the beliefs and ideals which a society seeks to achieve. Among such values expected of Nigerians for the sustenance of the current democratic government are various beliefs. Beliefs in the worth of every Nigerian; equal rights and liberties and corresponding responsibilities; maximum freedom and equality of opportunities irrespective of ethnic or religious affiliations; and the exercise of individual and group rights in ways that do not endanger other people's rights and national security (Ajitoni, 2017). Other beliefs included by Ajitoni are placing the common good before self-interest,

group or class loyalty; placing governance on property exacted and executed law; and that people are capable of governing themselves. These values should be the focus of Social Studies Education for development and sustainable democracy if the discipline must be relevant. Social Studies Education encompasses the study of human in the environment with the inclusion of civic responsibility. The aim of Social Studies, according to Beeghley as cited in Whillans, Caruso & Dunn (2017) is the endorsement of civic competence, knowledge, intellectual processes, and democratic nature required of students to be dynamic and engaged participants in public life. Although civic competence is not the only responsibility of Social Studies nor is it exclusive to the field, it is more essential to Social Studies than to any other subject area in schools when the issue of sustaining democratic values is concern. By making civic competence a central aim, the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) has long recognised the importance of educating students who are committed to the ideals and values of democracy. An important goal for Social Studies in Nigeria should be knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and social participation in this diverse, pluralistic and multi-cultural democratic society. The traditional goals of Social Studies Education - the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes - are, no doubt, focused on one major goal, that of the development of thinking abilities of the learner for societal development (Ajitoni, 2017).

Social Studies should be responsible for teaching students the citizenship skills that are required of people living in a democracy. The students learn to be politically active by interacting positively with each other and with other people around them. What goes on in the classroom should be of great importance here. While learning about how humans interact, students are able to start to form their own belief and value system. They will infer what they study about the past and the present as good or bad and this will shape the values that they have for their own lives. What they learn will equally guide their decisions in life (Whillans et al., 2017). Against this backdrop, Social Studies could be seen as an integrated study of human and the outcome of the interaction with the environment. This implies that Social Studies deal with how

human interacts in the society. Such interaction exemplifies human's interface in the process of governance in the society. In Social Studies, students learn about Nigeria and the role of citizens in a democratic society within a nation of complexities. They also apply the skills learned to develop an understanding of Nigerian identity and democratic values. The Social Studies programme allows children to contribute effectively in the groups to which they belong and not to look only to their future participation as adults. The school setting serves as a base where social and civic participation are conceived and acquired directly which can be plough during democratic setting for national growth and development (Omoregie & Idada, 2017).

In a similar vein, Enaiyeju as cited in Bakari (2017) posited that if democratic ideals are worthy of being preserved and strengthened for future generations, then it would be possible to see quite clearly the great need for citizenship education as contained in social studies curriculum. This becomes more vital when it is realized that there are lots of sociological and cultural forces that are at play in the present-day world - domestically and globally. In the center of these rapid and perplexing changes, the Nigerian society should have a faith in education and see such education as a major force in enabling the citizens to take hold of the changes, turn it not toward an unending conflict but toward peace and unity in diversity that will serve as a spring board for general development of the country. It then entails that through citizenship education, the democratic values are inculcated in the learners for the cultivation of sustainable democratic value system in the country. Although these positions are noted, the problem is the extent to which these democratic values are being taught by teachers and the level of students' embracing of the values. Therefore, much is needed to be done especially with the implementing of strategies aimed at sustaining democratic values in Nigeria with a bid to enhancing national growth and development.

Drawback of Democratic Governance in Nigeria

Over the years, the Nigerian government has failed to harness the vast human and materials resources at its disposal to break the

cycle of poverty that has characterized it since independence. Thus, the Nigerian state has been constantly struggling between the forces of democracy and authoritarianism. Rather than being at the service of the people, it is in the service of the ruling oligarch Fagbadebo as cited in Yagboyaju & Akinola, (2019); thus condemning the vast generality of the populace to poverty and frustration. Consequently, the challenges facing the country is huge and cannot be surmounted without a credible and competent leadership that emerged via credible electoral process. According to Ayatse, Onaga & Ogoh (2016), the following amongst others are some of the problems of democratic governance in Nigerian

Disintegrative nationalism: The political history of Nigeria is dominantly characterized by disintegrative nationalism which refers to the inclination towards sectional consciousness, due to perhaps the fragmentation of the nation into several nationalities at the damage of National loyalty, integration and stability.

Ethnicity: Democratic processes in Nigeria are criticized by observable leadership bias, in appointments, employment and distribution of national resources. Ethnicity has unrelentingly affects civil governance in Nigeria. Okam as cited in Omoregie and Idada (2017) described ethnicity as the bane of Nigerian politics.

Fraudulent elections: Awhen, Edinyang and Ipuole (2014) posited that democracy is not working in a pure perfect form anywhere in the world. In the case of Nigeria, elections are massively rigged and its results doctored. A vivid case in point is the newspapers reports inundated with election results nullified by the courts, specifically the 2007 and 2011 elections in Nigeria.

Non-independent judiciary: A democratic government is established with unbiased independent judiciary, which protects the citizens from the oppression of the ruled and fellow citizens in Nigeria, the appointment of Judges is directly influenced by the executives. The Executive heads have often used their power to appoint persons known to support their policies. However, in the present dispensation the Judiciary is commended for annulling

some spurious election results in Nigeria, while some escaped unrevised.

Socials Studies Education and Inculcation of Democratic Values

Social Studies education is richly endowed with social contents that help in the inculcation of civic and other traits in learners to make them veritable citizens of a country. The subject is aimed at strengthening consciousness of citizens towards national target. Hence, the veracity of its content to inculcating national values cannot be overemphasized. The following according to Mezieobi (2010) are some of the ways in which the subject inculcate values to learners.

Values clarification: One of the ways of inculcating democratic values in social studies students is by helping students identify their feelings and priorities about certain environmental issues. The position of the social studies teacher is to expose issues about the political life and political participation in Nigeria, the positive and negative experiences. Since democratic practice is a universal governmental practice, standard democratic principles have to be inculcated in the learner. This sharpens the rational intellectual energetic thinking power of the learner to assess the success of democratic governance in his country.

National interest focused instruction: While it is essential to focus conflict generating issues in Nigeria as religious differences, ethnic divide, corruption, poverty, marginalization amongst others in social studies instruction, the content and primary objective of the social studies curriculum and instruction should anchor on the promotion of national values for comprehensive integration of the minds and philosophies of Nigerians towards national unity. Mezieobi (2010) agree that social studies is value laden to teach national integration and unity; giving credence to the necessity of Social Studies Education to sustaining democratic values in the Nigerian state. Teaching values for democratic governance via social studies instruction will be meaningful and functionally relevant to the cognition of learner when there is justice and equity in Nigeria's

polity, leadership by example, if corruption is highly detested, high respect for the independence of the judiciary, curtailing of electoral violence, rigging and political murder, where religion or ethnicity do not determine ascendancy to public office (Osakwe, as cited in Jekayinfa (2018)). In other words the existing negative social issues in the Nigerian society may go a long way to work against value education projected and inculcated by social studies education.

Intensive research on fundamental social issues: Democratic governance has to be studied practically by students through observation, inquiry, use of documentations and assessment of relevant information materials. By this exercise, the learners are sensitized to appreciate the values of democratic governance through the survey of diversified literatures. However, the limitation is that government places emphasis on funding researches in science and technology as against social studies which is formulated to produce functional citizens equipped with knowledge, values, attitudes and skills for societal development and rehabilitation (Mezieobi, 2010). Intensive social studies research is a process of learning how to learn; and it examine a few cases as against extensive, with particular focus on understanding the causes and effect of a particular variable. Implicit here is that social studies is capable of equipping the citizen with an intensive zeal needed to tackling national challenges.

Conclusion

A nation can experience what true democracy is when citizens are encouraged to deliberate among themselves; to discover their differences without relying on some supreme control authority. In essence Social Studies Education content should promote values of democracy in our youths so that democratic tenet will be sustained, promoted and attained in the country. In the light of this, the paper concluded that Social Studies Education is the key to promoting and attaining sustainable democratic values in Nigeria and by extension, enhanced growth and development.

Suggestion

Arising from the conclusion, the paper suggested that Social Studies Education content should be made compulsory at all levels of education so that students will imbibe the right virtues that will project the nation on a strong footing thereby promoting and sustaining the country's democracy.

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