
PERSISTENT BENEFIT OF TRADITIONAL EDUCATION
IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY: A LESSON FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

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Abstract

Transmission of cultural values has been with Nigerians before the advent of the Europeans, values were passed from one generation to another. Values, such as the beliefs, norms, traditions and practices that are acceptable in the society guided and directed people's behaviour in the society. Nigeria has been encumbered with a number of challenges, most of which are self-inflicted but alien to Nigerian cultural values and practices. The once well celebrated values have since been replaced with vices due to misplaced priorities of Nigerians and this has led to a system of value disintegration where families no longer pass values to the next generation. The introduction of Social Studies as a school subject was to cure the society of this decadence and inculcate the right values in learners even from the school. This paper therefore examines inculcation of values in indigenous education, the concept of values and goals of teaching values in Social Studies. The paper concludes that, teachers of Social Studies and parents can instill good values into the younger generation by their conducts and strong emphasis on cultural value inculcation especially in Social Studies classes would help heal the wrong mindset of the people. As a way forward,

the study suggested that Social Studies should be taught in a pragmatic manner and teachers should pay more attention to value inculcation even in the Post COVID-19 era. Emphasis should be on good name and integrity whenever teachers are engaging the students.

Key words: *Values, Traditional education, Social Studies, Nigerian society.*

Introduction

The history of impacting knowledge into the younger generation in Nigeria is as old as humans in the society. Human beings around the Niger areas have been transferring knowledge, skills, values, norms, belief and the acceptable attitude to their younger generations long before the advent of the Europeans. Although, skills, values and knowledge transmitted during the period were not written anywhere but they were carefully engraved in the hearts of every citizen and the generations that received the education became a lot better under the system. The society cared greatly for their next generation and the people lived collectively in peace and harmony.

People thought of one another and the culture of the people did not permit them to be unkind to one another. Before the introduction of colonial system of government, all the ethnic groups in Nigeria such as, Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo had their own traditional citizenship education, social values, legal and civic right and duties which they taught and expected their people to follow in their day-to-day activities. All these values, rights, duties and obligations were passed orally from one generation to another as part of their cultures, but with the coming of the Europeans the much-celebrated culture and value became less emphasized because the African indigenous culture was tagged barbaric and uncivilized (Okafor, 1987).

The introduction of reading and writing which started with the coming of the Europeans in 1842 shifted attention from the traditional values of hard work, discipline, honesty, truth, responsibility, self-reliance, commitment, respect for lives and

properties to the classrooms where reading, writing and memorization were done without recourse to the traditional values, this lead to value disintegration where citizens no longer cared for one another. The traditional values and education became less important and citizens became less concerned about the well-being of each other. The one-time extended family structure where older family members took care of their younger generation were gradually eroded by the new family structure of “nuclear” family (Adeyinka & Babarinde, 2011). As young children were less attended to by their immediate family and society, instead of community ownership of children, immediate parents who have also taken up white government jobs were left alone to care for their children. According to Adeyinka & Babarinde (2011), value disintegrated society face many internal problems along with external ones, value integration has led Nigerian societies into many problems such as, indecent mode of dressing, lack of respect for elders, sexual relations among unmarried young people, lack of cooperation in doing things, sexual harassment and intimidation, rape, banditry, boko haram insurgency, ritual killings, kidnapping, oil bunkering, get rich quick syndrome, prostitution and trafficking, drug abuse and cultism, embezzlement and corruption in government and private organization, lack of respect for human lives and properties among other vices ravaging the country.

The country cannot continue to survive with these endless problems militating against the citizens. A drastic solution must be proffered to end the numerous problems of the country. To this end, a blend of traditional and western education must be the way forward, emphasis should be on any school subject designed to inculcate cultural values and patriotism in citizens of Nigeria, as the country is currently gravitating towards a state of anarchy hence a school subject that can educate the minds of the younger Nigerians is Social Studies. Social Studies is generally described as the subject that studies man in his physical and social environment.

Ojedokun (2001) defined Social Studies as the modern study of an interdisciplinary and interrelated study of a topic, a problem, an issue, a concern or an appreciation, this means that Social Studies according to Ojedokun, Social Studies should be studied to help the

nation understand the problems and concerns of the citizens and also help the citizens unravel the root cause of the country's problems. Ezegebe (2000) also defined Social Studies as an integrated programme that concerned itself with those subjects and skills that seems to be uniquely associated with citizenship. This definition of Social Studies is directly connected to the thrust of this paper, because creating good learners will amount to creating good citizens. However, no matter how laudable a programme or subject is, its implementation must be carefully carried out for it to achieve its set objectives.

According to the National Council for Social Studies (1994), the primary purpose of Social Studies is to help young people make informed and reasonable decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. It is also to inculcate national consciousness and national unity in students and citizens who are capable and willing to develop the society. Inculcate the right value and skills for active social life; the development of intellectual skills, knowledge and ability. With all the laudable goals of Social Studies, well written and being taught in Nigerian schools, the society still continues to be plagued by vices which are alien to the Nigerian indigenous culture, it is then right to have a position paper of an advocacy type which seeks for a blend of traditional value and education in a more practical manner in Social Studies classes.

Indigenous Education in Nigeria

The indigenous or informal education system in Nigeria is as old as the people in the region, this education starts from birth, the aim was the transmission of culture from one generation to another. Osokoya (2010) sees traditional education as a process of transmitting the accumulated intellectual skills, values, beliefs and attitudes of the society from one generation to another. The education has helped to prepare youth for active participation and transmission of her rich cultural values from one generation to another.

Fafunwa (1974) however, defined education as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops abilities,

attitudes and other forms of behaviours which are of positive value to the society in which he or she lives. The following aims and goals of education were also listed by Fafunwa to give a clear picture of the kind of education the Nigerian societies gave to younger generation. The aims include: to develop the child's latent physical skills; to develop character; to inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority; to develop intellectual skills; to develop specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour; to develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs and lastly, to understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

Of a particular interest to this paper is the aim of traditional education that talked about development of character. Although, the seven aims mentioned above are relevant to this paper but second, sixth and the seventh are of utmost importance as we take a profound look at the particular decadence of our contemporary society, the informal education has a permanent print on every child's heart. It was more of a way of life and everyone had a collective responsibility of raising the next generation together.

All Adults of a community were teachers and custodians of knowledge, hence, the elders and parents of younger generation readily taught, them the communal values and skills. This system of education starts from birth and ends at death, functionality was the guiding principle of the traditional education (Fafunwa, 1994) as children were expected to be of good character which is seen as inculcating respect for old age, loyalty to parents and local traditions honesty in all private and public life was the norm with every member of the society.

Osokoya further stated that character training and religious education could be claimed as the cornerstone of the traditional education. Every family wanted and trained children who would be humble, honest, persevering and of good report at all times and in all places. Fair play was also encouraged among the children, the concept 'Omoluabi' was not just welcomed, it was the desire of every family. The concept of omoluabi literarily means a total child', this means every family raised a child that is morally upright, vocationally

self-reliant, community relevant and highly functional to himself and the entire community.

In the traditional system, though largely with unwritten curriculum, boys were properly raised to become good fathers later in life, they followed their fathers to the farm to learn farming and also follow the father's footsteps, boys do not just learn farming, they learn the father's character by their constant walk with their fathers. Girls in turn follow their mothers everywhere, they learn simple household chores that would make them useful and successful mothers and wives, they learn how to fetch water, firewood and cook sumptuous meals with the meagre quantity of resources available to them, they also began to learn the acceptable norms and values of the society as they help their mother fix the meals.

The mode of teaching in the traditional system of education was not direct as there were no obvious classrooms but teaching was indirectly done in the form of observation, imitation, practice and mimicking. Mother tongue which is the language of the immediate environment was the language of communication, so no one was confused about any concept. Adage and proverbs were extensively used Majasan (1967) in Osokoya (2010) as the use of proverbs was to bring out the clear meaning of hidden points in any conversation or argument. Proverbs like *Ágboju le ogun fi ara re fun osi ta* "A man who relies on the parent's wealth will eventually become poor. *'Ise ni pa ni, ise kii pa ni'*, it is poverty that kills humans not work. This generally connotes that whoever will not work will attract poverty and it is the poverty that will eventually kill whoever refuses to work., *'Eni ti ko se bi alaarú loyíngbo ko le se bi Adegboro loja oba'*, this also means whoever will not work hard anywhere, will not be able to enjoy some pleasures of life, all these pointed to the fact that values were enshrined into every member of the society. Different vocations were also available in the informal system of education (Adeyinka & Babarinde 2011). There was agricultural education which takes care of fishing, farming, animal care and animal rearing, trading and crafts which includes weaving, smiting, building, carving, sculpture, painting and decorating, boat-making, dying and there were the advance professions which includes priesthood, medicine, justice, hunting, military, chieftaincy, kingship,

communal living was the order of the day and every one had the responsibility of taking care of other members of the community (Fafunwa, 1994). The barter system of trade was practiced and currency was not in use in the indigenous economy, the level of truth and trustworthiness that followed that remains unparalleled, unfortunately western system of education which started as a by-product of the activities of the Christian missionaries' indigenous values were not entrenched and this has caused persistent value disintegration in the Nigeria Society (Adeyinka & Babarinde 2011). While no community or society ever agrees on everything, value disintegration means a movement away from high level of agreement to lower level. Value disintegration occurs whenever a society alters its way of earning a living or the way its members stay together. For example, whenever a society changes from being an agricultural, rural and stable economy into an industrial, commercial, urban and mobile economy, that society is likely to experience loss of integration of value (Adeyinka & Babarinde 2011). The formal system of Education started as an accidental by-product of the activities of the Christian missionaries on 24th September, 1842, although the education came with the ability to read and write, it left so much to be desired in the area of values inculcation, it left the inculcation of the indigenous values and norms largely to the family and concentrate on the ability to read and write, this resulted in a form of value disintegration in the once reliable, peaceful, truthful and agrarian society which valued and cared absolutely for both lives and properties of one another.

The Concept of Values

Anything that serves as a guideline for our action can be labelled as a value. Ogunkeye (2012) defines value as a belief, a mission or a philosophy that is meaningful. Values are ideas of thought or formulations that we perceive to be necessary truth about life. Values are the personal measures of worth, beliefs, principles we attached to certain things. Every individual has a core set of personal values such as; belief in hard work and punctuality, self-reliance, concern for others etc.

Without values our lives will have no direction and we will be compelled to act solely by our urges and passions. We take to values in order to live a purposeful life and become truly human. Values drive us, motivate us, moves us forward in life and enable us to take the necessary next steps towards positive direction, improve the economic, social and cultural condition of a nation; or move society forward in a path of progress (Ogunkeye, 2012). Values have propelled people to dedicate their entire lives or even give up their lives to pursue their values as many patriots have done fighting for values of freedom, equality and human survival e.g. Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Martin Luther king Jr. of United States of America etc.

Individual and Values

Whether one realizes it or not, people have e values that determine their decisions and guide their everyday life. Those who value their individuality, take responsibilities, are self-reliant and act with self-respect. There are also those who value truthfulness, who cannot bring themselves to tell a lie. Those who value family and friendship sacrifice their personal interests for the good of others. Those who value goodness cannot bring themselves to do something they know is wrong.

Nigerians express values in their relations with other people (interpersonal), when people are loyal, reliable, honest, generous, trusting, trustworthy, when people feel a sense of responsibility for family, friends, co-workers, our organization, community or country. On a more physical level (physical values), People may place great values on cleanliness, punctuality, orderliness, accuracy, quality and physical perfection in whatever that needs to be done (Ogunkeye, 2012).

Society and Values

Societies acquire values through a long process of trial-and-error experimentation with various approaches to life. Over the years, the society has come to recognize that certain principles or guidelines are essential for the survival or vital for the growth of the individual and the community. The society learns principles by experience and

passes them on to the future generations as cultural guidelines for actions. The society may discover that cleanliness is essential for health; punctuality and regularity of action are essential success in agriculture; honesty and truthfulness are essential in trade; loyalty and patriotism are essential for integrity and defense of the community; responsibility, generosity and self-sacrifice are the bedrock of the family and society. The more an individual strive to live by these values, the higher he or she will rise in consciousness and experiences in your life.

Attributes and Importance of Values

Values can be positive (what is good or desirable) or negative (detestable or bad) depending on individual judgments and perception; values are ideas of what individuals perceive to be important truths about life; values are sources of power that energize us; values are primary determinants of human success; values come alive when our emotions embrace them and values come from feelings and are processes that can be learned (Ogunkeye, 2012). The following importance of values must be enumerated for us to understand its usefulness in nation building. They are: values give our lives meaning; when we take to value, we live purposeful and dynamic lives and become truly human; values provide energies that drive us to the heights of success and bring deep fulfilment of our ambitions; values motivate us and enable us to take the next step in a positive direction; good values improve, economic, social and cultural conditions of a society or country; values are paths to perfection; values are the keys of becoming important individuals and realizing our ambitions.

Values enable us to overcome challenges, constraints, limitations or problems; values attract people to us and make life easier to us; values create leaders and shape our lives; values create wealth, success, knowledge, and joy; values promote good relationship among people and guide human behaviours in the society; values help individuals in taking good decisions and resisting bad behaviours; values are used as the standard of judgment of people behaviour, attitudes actions in a society and lastly, values help us to understand what society likes and what we are expected

to do in order to be accepted into a society (Adedokun & Owolabi 2014).

Goals of Teaching Values in Social Studies

The present-day Nigeria had deviated from the well celebrated values which were held in high esteem, Social Studies as a subject was created to teach citizens morals and values of the society and to help citizens imbibe the spirit of good neighbourliness, since value provides for the condition for both the personal development of an individual and for the development of the society as a whole. It is to also inculcate into the citizens a specific set of civic values and principles essential to the nurturing of democratic culture, such as tolerance, trust and respect for the rule of law.

Social Studies was also created as a school subject to enables citizens to develop an awareness of their personal goals and values which they can pursue in the context of their local community and the nation as a whole. It also helps citizens to apply civic knowledge and skills in evaluating the problems of the wider society. It helps to develop positive attitude and values in students, it develops positive attitudes, skills and values that will promote active participation in societal affairs. It also helps individuals to understand his duties and obligations in the society.

Duties are responsibilities or work which individuals are expected to perform in a community in return for the freedom or right they enjoy as a citizen of a place or country. Citizen must perform their duty in order to promote the peace and progress of their country while obligations are responsibilities that the government expects individuals to perform. These responsibilities or obligations however are not compulsory and do not have the backing or the force of law (Adedokun & Owolabi 2014).

Obligations are performed at an individual's free-will, conscience and personal decision to help other in the society. Some of the duties of individuals in a country are: Regular payment of taxes, rates and declaration of income, honesty to the government. Register and vote during elections (for people of 18 years and above in Nigeria). Abide by the country's constitution, respect the National Flag, the National Anthem, National pledge and legitimate

authorities in the country. Help the law enforcement agencies in the maintenance of law and order. Respect the dignity of citizens, and live in unity and harmony with others. Protect the image of the country and render national services as required by the government. Responsibilities of citizens also include participating in public exercises such as environmental sanitation. Obey traffic regulations, protect public properties e.g., public water pipes, electric cables, and so on. Respect Government Officials and make useful contribution to the well-being of the community. Helping the children and people living with disabilities to cross the road. Helping or giving alms to the poor or the needy. Turning-off public water taps to prevent waste of public resources.

Of all the duties and obligations listed above, of a great importance is protection of lives and properties of every member of the society. It is very sad now that citizens are being killed by other citizens, there are others who are called 'Yahoo boys' or fraudsters, while some people are working hard to earn decent living some are living off other members of the communities.

It is also unfortunate that most armed robbers are residents of the areas they are robbing, the 'EndSARS' protest of October 2020 across the Nigerian states further exposed the deplorable state of the nation. Citizens burnt both humans and properties without mercy, these attitudes, examination malpractices, disregard for human lives, vicious killings, bribery and corruption, theft, banditry and several other vices are alien to the Nigerian culture and must be taken care immediately before Nigeria becomes incorrigible.

All formal and non-formal learning and other activities that enable people develop a commitment to good societal values and principles, democratic and political system and process and governance in a country should be reinforced by our school system. In order to make a success of the democratic system, people need to be educated. The required knowledge that empowers people to become informed and active in political, economic and social areas in a society is known as value education

All forms of traditional education teach (or aimed at inculcating) respect for others and recognition of equality of all human being; and combating all forms of discrimination (racism,

gender-biased, religion etc.) by fostering a spirit of tolerance and peace among human beings. Traditional education has dimensions cultural dimension: It refers to the collective representations and expression of shared values and traditions within and between groups in a society, including an appreciation of their historical background (Ogunkeye, 2012).

Citizenship education can be defined as a body of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to equip and re-orientate people in order to function or participate effectively in all activities aimed at the collective goals or development of society, nation or country. They must be educated to make constructive and critical contribution to politics, society, charitable work and good neighbourliness. The name varies from one country to another, but they all emphasize the making of an active, reflective and constructive citizens.

Value inculcation can help Nigerians to reconnect with their communities and their government and promote a more inclusive society where people are able to understand and participate in a democratic process by informing them how the political processes work.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the place of value inculcation in the indigenous economy, the importance and goals of values in the traditional economy and how the society can become a better place if the concept of values can be taught seriously in schools especially in Social Studies classes. Teachers of Social Studies and parents can instill good values into the younger generation by their conducts as well. Every society understands its challenges and problems, although the problems were originally alien to Nigerian societies and the people, they are already eating deep into the fabrics of the nation and only strong emphasis on cultural value inculcation in education especially in Social Studies classes would help heal the wrong mindset of the people.

Way forward

Social Studies should be taught in a pragmatic manner and teachers should pay more attention to value inculcation even in the Post COVID-19 era. Social Studies teachers must exhibit behaviours that can help students improve their attitude both within and outside the school compound. Indigenous proverbs should be used to reinforce right attitude and also correct wrong conduct in schools. Emphasis should be on good name and integrity whenever teachers are engaging the students and the concept of 'omoluabi' should be well taught in schools to bring about the desired change in Nigeria.

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