

The Role of Social Studies Education in Reversing the Falling Value System in Nigeria

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Abstract

The cherished value system of Nigeria is being diminished and destroyed on a daily basis. This has brought a lot of maladjusted character and conduct of indiscipline, dishonesty, kidnapping, terrorism, bad leadership and disobedience that affect the image of the country negatively. This article holds the view that elements of positive Nigerian value system of faithfulness, love/patriotic zeal, loyalty, honesty and obedience that are found in the Nigerian anthem and pledge should be effectively inculcated in students at all levels of education. It also posits that for Social Studies education to remedy the falling value system, there should be reintroduction of values into Social Studies curriculum, periodic evaluation and review of Social Studies curriculum, competent teachers to deliver on the contents, establishment of Social Studies laboratories in schools and integration of elements of Social Studies education in leadership recruitment channel.

Keywords: value, system, nigeria, social, studies, education

Introduction

Value system of Nigeria has been relegated to the background. This is not unconnected with the open display of negative behaviour that is being exhibited by unpatriotic citizens despite the consequences that follow such actions. It is sad that Nigeria as a developing nation and the giant of Africa is still bedeviled with certain traits that undermine the growth and development of its corporate existence. Indeed, capturing the picture more clearly, Shamija, Alachi and Moji (2013: 19) stated that, "if there is anything which operates effectively, uniformly and smoothly, all over the country, it is the twin engine of the machinery of corruption and bribery." This explains how the society lacks honesty, integrity, transparency and accountability which affect the philosophy and aspiration of a nation like Nigeria. According to Olawoyin (2018),

Nigeria ranked 148 out of 180 countries assessed on the perception of corruption. On the African continent, Nigeria ranks 32nd position out of 52 assessed countries in 2017. Worst still, in West Africa, the report has it that Nigeria is the second most corrupt out of the 17 countries leaving only Guinea Bissau behind with poverty index of 53.7% which makes Nigeria rank 2nd poorest country in the world (Olawoyin, 2018).

In another development, the value of punctuality has been treated with disdain. This is worsened by the coinage “African Time” which implies lateness or disregard for time. Similarly, the value system of respect for constituted authority is perceived inconsequential in today’s Nigeria. Nigerian institutions of authority are grossly abused by her citizens in words or action. For instance, the invasion of the National Assembly (Senate) by unknown gunmen in 2018 led to the desecration of the hallowed chamber. Obviously, the gradual and steady falling of the value of national unity is disheartening and a valid recipe for disintegration. Indeed, lot of factors such as nepotism, ethnicity, greed, less emphasis on inter-ethnic marriage, violation of the constitution and setting aside of the Federal Character Principle could be responsible for the negative value of disunity.

Despite the efforts of government in the fight against corruption and other negative tendencies, it is abundantly obvious that the Nigerian state is presently confronted with moral decay which affects its image and the productive capacity of her citizens. Consequent upon this, the need to tackle the menace of falling value system in Nigeria becomes inevitable. That is the reason Social Studies education is seen as a potent instrument that can be used to restore the battered value system in Nigeria. However, to achieve this feat, certain proactive measures and systematic approach are necessary. In agreement with this, Ikwumelu (2018) stated that the potency of Social Studies education in addressing man’s challenges has earned its recognition in many countries. Similarly, Agbo and Auwalu (2015) noted that developed nations such as United States of America and Canada still believe that their survival and future rest on carefully planned and effective implementation of Social Studies education programme. In view of this, the instrumentality of Social Studies education is sacrosanct in remedying the falling value system.

Social Studies education: clarifying the concept

There is no universally agreed definition of Social Studies education, although, attempts have been made by different scholars to elucidate the concept of Social Studies education. According to Njoku (2010), Social Studies education can be seen as a value-oriented subject concerned with the training of citizens to imbibe appropriate national values and develop appropriate attitudes for leadership and nation building. In a similar view, Rofem (2016) defined Social Studies education as the subject that inculcates in learners lofty societal values such as obedience, loyalty,

faithfulness, honesty, patriotism, diligence, respect for constituted authority, etc. This indicates that the core objective of Social Studies education is to instill, on the students, the Nigerian value system that is needed for positive change. Mezieobi and Edinyang (2013) noted that Social Studies is a value laden course of instruction meant to equip the learner with the cognition, values, attitude and functional skills to survive in an ever dynamic society.

Consequent upon the different definitions of Social Studies education, it could be succinctly stated that Social Studies education is anchored and driven by value education that is the bedrock of every society. Hence, Social Studies education can be seen as the body of knowledge that is value-based and instilled for the essence of correcting and establishing a better society.

Nigerian value system

Exclusively, the Nigerian value system is found in the letter and spirit of the Nigerian National Anthem and Pledge. A careful look and understanding of these national anthem and pledge summarizes the Nigerian value system. The Nigeria Anthem goes thus:

Arise, O compatriots, Nigeria's call obey
To serve our fatherland
With love and strength and faith
The labour of our heroes past
Shall never be in vain
To serve with heart and might
One nation bound in freedom
Peace and unity

Oh God of creation, direct our noble cause
Guide our leaders right
Help our youth the truth to know
In love and honesty to grow
And living just and true
Great lofty heights attain
To build a nation where peace and justice
Shall reign (Ibok, 2018).

The Nigerian Pledge

I pledge to Nigeria, my country
To be faithful, loyal and honest
To serve Nigeria with all my strength
To defend her unity

And uphold her honour and glory
So help me God (Ibok, 2018).

Elements of the Nigerian value system

1. **Faithfulness:** This entails staying with or supporting the country at all times. It is a firm belief in the existence, progress and oneness of the nation. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) declared “We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, having firmly and solemnly resolved to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation.” This presupposes the faith Nigerian people have towards the nation. Therefore, the value of faithfulness must not be altered by ethnic, political or religious reasons.
2. **Love /patriotic zeal:** The Nigeria nation relies greatly on the virtue of love, upon which the country can move to enviable heights. According to Adejumo (2014), patriotic zeal is seen as a positive and supportive attitude to a “fatherland” by individuals and groups. The major implication for lack of patriots in the past and in recent times is as a result of the fact that many Nigerians are replacing patriotism with selfishness (Famutimi, 2014). It is this patriotic zeal that propelled some Nigerians who sacrificed their time, energy and life to fight for the independence of this great nation. Little wonder, the third line in the National Anthem made it clear that “the labour of our heroes past shall not be in vain.” The identification of this value is one thing, inculcation is another. The core philosophy of Social Studies education is to express concern, passion and indeed love for the country. So, Social Studies education forms the nucleus and a veritable tool to instill this value that is fast being eroded from the consciousness of most Nigerians. Indeed, there seems to be no love among Nigerians as human life had become valueless as observed recently in activities of bandits, kidnappers, cattle rustlers and other forms of criminality in Zamfara, Kaduna, Sokoto and Katsina states (Agada & Bello, 2019).
3. **Loyalty:** This is the consistent support and solidarity to the state. Indeed, for any nation to experience growth and development, loyalty from the people is crucial. It is loyalty that brings stability, peace, progress and integration in a nation. According to Ibok (2018), loyalty is an essential ingredient that stabilizes the components of leadership and followership. This explains the fact that when the value of loyalty is demonstrated at every level, certain negative factors are eroded. Loyalty is needed in every facets of life. This is because, it allows rules and regulations to be smoothly implemented devoid of unconstructive moves. Loyalty to a nation entails obedience to rules and regulations, reporting suspected criminal elements to security agencies, protecting government property, payment of taxes, etc.
4. **Honesty:** This is the quality of being sincere, upright and showing high moral principle. A nation like Nigeria cannot progress when honest people are lacking.

Undoubtedly, this may be the reason why social issues such as poverty, corruption, bribery, leadership problem, weak followership are on the increase. Worse still, citizens have tilted toward ethnic agitation, tribal sentiments and religious bigotry, instead of the value of honesty. This destroys the nation that wants to grow. This can be properly stopped through Social Studies education in view of its mandate and philosophy.

5. **Obedience:** This is the ability or capacity to obey rules and regulations for the purpose of achieving a set goal. Obedience to constituted authority is a sine-qua-non to achieving great heights. In a country where citizens are known for disobeying the laws of the land, a state of anarchy is unavoidable. It is the obedience to laws that makes a country respected among comity of nations. According to Ibok (2018), obedience is a virtue that every nation that wants to grow must imbibe. Agreeably, it is a value system that forms the bedrock of development of a country. In Nigeria presently, obedience is grossly low due to some social conditions such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and ignorance, which limit human beings from being responsive to national and constitutional demands. Obedience to rules and regulations makes citizens responsible. It could be recalled that section 24 of the 1999 Constitution provides for the performance of duties of a citizen such as abiding by the constitution, helping to enhance the power, prestige and name of the country and respecting the rights of other citizens.

Obedience model

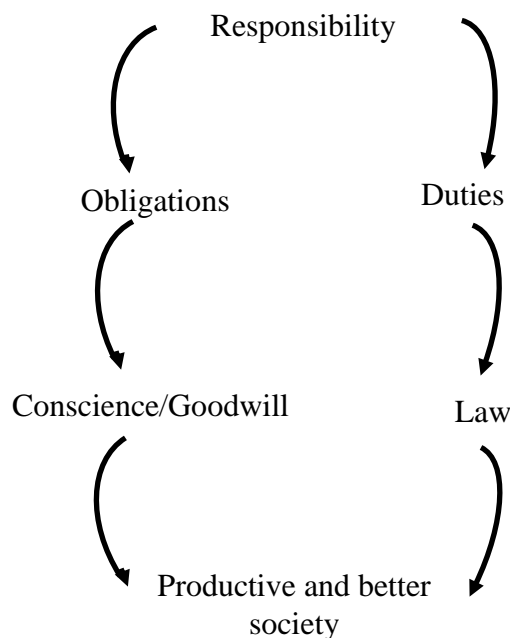


Fig. 1: Obedience model, adopted from Osim, 2018

The model shows the two facets of obedience to responsibility (duties and obligations) in which duties are expected to be obeyed or performed by citizens as stipulated in section 24 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Obligations anchored on the conscience or goodwill of the citizens which is expressed by performing for productive and better society.

Social Studies education and the Nigerian falling value system

In Nigeria, it has been observed that the values of unity, patriotism, hard work, loyalty, respect for constituted authority, patience and punctuality are in total disarray. This is seen in the actions and inactions of the people, such as the shameless defection of politicians from one party to another, high profile corruption cases in courts, the quest to get rich at all cost, nepotism, high rate of examination malpractice in schools, unprofessional conduct of security personnel during elections, vote selling and buying, etc. This trend affects the image of a country, and hinders the growth and development of a nation. However, these negative values are being enhanced by certain factors such as collapse of family value system, influence of social media, influence of western culture, religious extremism, influence of drugs, poor education system and poor leadership.

Social Studies education is the solution to these problems as it is a dynamic and problem solving field of study that inculcates rational thinking in a citizen. This function of Social Studies as an integral subject, as reasoned by Mezieobi (2018), was identified in developed countries of the world such as United States of America, Britain and Canada, in building and enhancing the attitudinal capacities of citizens. According to Edinyang, Unimke, Ubi, Opoh and Iwok (2015), the purpose of Social Studies in United States of America was to deal realistically with the problems of social instability, criminality, bribery, rape, unemployment, electoral fraud, poverty and dishonest tendencies. Thus, with the introduction of Social Studies education in their schools and institutions of leadership, a remarkable change in behaviour was recorded.

In line with this colossal achievement of Social Studies education in developed countries of the world, amongst other reasons, Rofem (2016) concluded that it is as a result of these laudable achievements of Social Studies in developed countries that motivated Nigerian government and policymakers in education to introduce Social Studies in Nigerian educational system. Similarly, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) and Philosophy of Social Studies Education outlined the functions of Social Studies in different strata of Nigerian educational system to include:

1. At the pre-primary and primary levels of education, interest is centered on the inculcation of social norms, team spirit, creative ability, rational thinking, good

citizenship, effective participation in community activities, character and moral training, sound attitudes and dynamism in society.

2. At the secondary level of Nigerian education, the objectives of Social Studies are to instill independent thinking, respect for the views and feelings of others, respect for the dignity of labour, and fostering Nigerian unity and productivity.
3. At the tertiary or post-secondary education, social studies education inculcates proper value system aimed at intellectual development, skill acquisition and promotion of national integration.

Social Studies Education as an instrument to remedying the falling value system

Social Studies education is a veritable tool that can sensitize our society through the inculcation of positive value system. Social Studies education was formally introduced into the Nigerian education system in 1969 (Esu & Inyang-Abia, 2004). However, it is quite unbelievable that despite the lofty objectives and positive outcomes of Social Studies education, Nigeria is still encumbered with many social problems. It is in this wise that the following strategies are proffered to actualize the instrumentality of Social Studies education in remedying the falling value system:

1. Reintroduction of values into Social Studies curriculum

The content of the current Social Studies education curriculum for junior secondary school has been altered and devoid of the value system the subject stands for. According to Mezieobi (2018), the carving out of Civic Education from Social Studies ushers in an era of balkanization of Social Studies since the core component of the subject such as value education, citizenship education, law related education, etc are likely to become discrete school subjects in no distant future. This recent move by the federal government to move value education and political content of Social Studies to Civic Education has disrupted the philosophy and national goals of Social Studies education and stifled its ability to address moral decay in the society. Onuoha (2010) stated that the curriculum of Social Studies education is to make students acquire knowledge, desirable attitudes, values and skills required to be responsible and disciplined citizens of any society. In the Junior Secondary School curriculum of Religion and National Values (Social Studies), these core values are conspicuously absent.

2. Periodic evaluation and review of Social Studies education curriculum

The Social Studies education curriculum, as an instrument for transformation and value orientation, requires a periodic and constant evaluation in order to determine its efficacy in solving contemporary societal problem as the society is dynamic. Supporting this assertion, Fan, Aaron and Ekpo (2013) stated that the society has entered a period of unprecedented environmental changes as seen in the rapid growth of natural and man-made changes, such as floods, erosion, overpopulation, land degradation and other social issues. As a result of this, creative and proactive measures are needed to mitigate these social menaces through a potent instrument of Social

Studies education curriculum. Also, comprehensive overhauling of Social Studies education programme, as a necessary condition for effective implementation, is crucial.

3. Competent teachers to deliver on the contents

The need for competent Social Studies education teachers cannot be overemphasized. The teacher is seen as the vessel that passes a body of knowledge to the learner. Competence is perceived from the perspective of professionalism, effective delivery pattern, knowledge of the subject matter, evaluation strategies, diverse pedagogy to classroom management techniques etc. According to Eteng and Asu-Ojua (2018), to ensure that Social Studies is taught very well, it is pertinent that methods, techniques and strategies are not misplaced at the point of instructional delivery by the Social Studies teacher.

4. Establishment of research based Social Studies education laboratories in all institutions of learning

The absence or inadequate Social Studies education laboratories is a huge challenge. To actualize the philosophy of Social Studies education through the process of teaching and learning, there is the need for concepts to be matched with objects. This is possible when these resources are available for use. According to Mezieobi, Nwalado and Igbokwe (2014), the use of instructional materials in teaching Social Studies education in Nigeria, is to make sure that students and pupils get instructions practically to enable them apply value education acquired in solving societal problems.

5. Integration of elements of Social Studies education in Nigerian leadership recruitment channel

Social studies education as the bedrock of development addresses every societal need when properly applied. The value education content in Social Studies is germane and result oriented. It is on this strength that Unimna (2018) asserted that social studies education “remains the most veritable and effective instrument of change, values transmission and national development.” For instance, the 2019 Nigeria Presidential Debate should have captured vividly the Nigerian value system in the course of questioning. According to Edinyang, Osim and Ekemini (2018), the quest for “get rich quick” syndrome is a manifestation of weak value system by citizens. This has led many into corruption and other social ills that have brought the image of this country into disrepute.

Conclusion

Nigeria as a country is confronted with litany of challenges that are rooted in a weak and falling value system. This has brought several problems to the Nigerian state, such as corruption, bribery, poverty, electoral fraud, bad governance and ineffective followership. It is in view of this that social studies education is urgently needed to revive the falling value system in Nigeria. Suffice it to mention that, Nigerian value systems that are incidentally universal are enshrined in the National Anthem and the

National Pledge. Some of these value systems are faithfulness, love /patriotic zeal, loyalty, honesty and obedience. Research has shown that social studies education has been vital in shaping the moral values of citizens all over the world. To achieve this feat effortlessly, certain strategies are key, such as bringing back values into Social Studies curriculum, comprehensive evaluation and review of Social Studies education curriculum, recruitment of competent teachers to deliver on the contents, establishment of research-based Social Studies laboratories, among others.

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