

Relationship between Social Education, Social Justice and Social Change

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between social education, social justice and social change of students in the University of Calabar. Two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Literature review was carried out based on the variables under study. Survey research design was considered most suitable for the study. Purposive random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the 130 respondents as sample for the study. A validated 30-item four point modified Likert scale questionnaire titled “Social Education as a Tool for Social Justice and Social Change Questionnaire” (SETSJSCQ) was the instrument used for data collection. To test the null hypotheses formulated for the study, Pearson product moment correlation statistical tool was used for analysis. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results obtained from analysis of data revealed that there was a positive significant relationship between social education, social justice and change. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that, for positive and effective social justice and change to take place in Nigeria, Nigeria must recognise good social education, good governance, transparency, accountability and the rule of law as keys to such social justice and change.

Keywords: Social education, social justice, social change.

Introduction

Around the world, societies struggle with issues of discrimination and many individuals are denied their rights as a result of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, socioeconomic class or disability. Despite advances in health, education and technology, indicators such as poverty, violence, environmental degradation and lack of access to quality healthcare and education suggest the current state of social justice is on the decline (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2011; United Nations, 2006). In 2014, “nearly 36 million men, women, and children were living in modern day slavery worldwide” (Global Slavery Index, 2014 Pg. 124). Modern day slavery is defined as “human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, commercial sexual exploitation and the sale and exploitation of

children” (Global Slavery Index, 2014 Pg.125). Social justice is a concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society.

The traumatic nature of injustice is well documented. A growing body of research has begun to illuminate how cumulative effects of unresolved transgenerational trauma result in the deterioration of communities and significant elevation of individuals risk to physical and mental illness. Societies that experience historical trauma face lower academic achievement, decreased social mobility, shortened life-span and issues such as substance abuse and suicidal tendencies (Atkinson, Nelson & Atkinson, 2010; Cohen, Farley, & Mason, 2003). These statistics indicate that social justice may be one of the most dire public health issues of our time. Historically, interest and motivation to engage in social change has ebbed and flowed; yet, the common elements of social movements that have created more just societies indicate the importance of collective communities, solidarity, conscious raising, political involvement and belief that justice is possible. Social justice practice behaviours are varied, and commonly include activities such as advocacy, protests, community organizing, lobbying, street theatre, street art, and research for policy change. However, some scholars suggest the most critical element in any social change effort to be the coming together of community and healing relationships that develop between people in the pursuit of liberation and justice (Atkinson, et al., 2010; Chomsky, 2012). Since the purpose of social education “is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society”(Pg.56), many scholars believe social education is an appropriate field to explore these topics of injustice (Banks, 2004; Wade, 2007).

Social change considered generally desirable in society may precipitate and increase social problems. Equal rights and privileges given to women in developing countries, including Nigeria, may have been generally welcomed as a desirable change, for women can enjoy freedom and enter into economic, political and other spheres of social life. However, such action, particularly in urban industrial areas, especially in metropolitan cities, also has given rise to problems of the effective performance of women’s role in the home as wife and mother, and sub-standard family life with inadequate nurture and care of children. These and many other circumstances associated with social change give rise to varied social problems, thus, both are closely interwoven in their relationship (Puja, 2015). Many social problems result from the processes of social change. As such, a changing society inevitably develops problems.

Social reformers have stressed the importance of social education as the single most important instrument and medium for bringing about change in society. It is a

process which enables individuals to effectively participate in the activities of society and to make positive contributions to the progress of society. Social education is of great help to people in identifying their limitations and weaknesses or gaps in knowledge and then helping them to remedy those gaps. Also, Drucker (2011) has stated that the “highly educated man has become the central resource of today’s society and the supply of such men is the true measure of its economic, military and even its political potential.” Social education has changed our attitude and outlook.

There are many unresolved problems in Nigeria, but the recent upsurge in corruption remains particularly troubling. The damage done to the polity as a result of institutional corruption is astronomical. Corruption leads to (and includes) the slow movement of files in offices, police extortion, slow traffic on roads and highways, port congestion, queues at passport offices and gas stations, ghost workers, and election irregularities. As a result of the ongoing and deep impacts of widespread corruption, the issue is one that reoccurs regularly in most academic and informal discussions in Nigeria (Dike, 2012). Other issues threatening the well-being of Nigeria include drug abuse, the declining quality of education, environmental pollution/degradation, family problems (increased divorce and family abuse/struggle), gender discrimination, governmental abuse of power, limited energy supplies, poverty, racial discrimination, unemployment, and weakening social institutions (such as religion) (Ololube, Onyekwere, Kpolovie & Agabi, 2012). When people are deprived of their basic social rights, social problems arise, and the need for social change becomes both obvious and inevitable.

Social change is the significant alteration of social structures and cultural patterns through time. These structures or patterns are made up of an enduring network of social relationships in which interaction between people or groups has become constant. Social change can affect everything from education, population, politics, culture, law, and administration to the economy and international affairs. Social change often happens alongside other major changes such as industrialisation. It is a process whereby the values, attitudes, or institutions of society (such as education, family, religion and industry) are modified and includes both natural processes and action programmes initiated by members of the affected community (Ololube, 2011). Social change refers to the functional characteristics and types of change that take place in society. It can include:

- i. A change in social structure: in the social institutions, social behaviour and/or social relations of a society or community of people.
- ii. A situation where behaviour patterns change in large numbers, and this change is visible and sustained. Once there is deviance from culturally-

- inherited values, rebellion against the established system may arise, resulting in a broad change in the social order.
- iii. Any event or action that affects a group of individuals who have shared values or characteristics.
 - iv. Acts of advocacy for the cause of changing society in a way subjectively perceived as normatively desirable.

Although social educators often say the purpose of social education “is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society”, many wonder how they can approach these topics of social injustice and help students realize and promote social change in society with the help of education (Wade, 2007).

To this end, this paper investigates the relationship between social education, social justice and social change among students in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine relationship among social education and social justice and change. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the relationship between social education and social justice.
2. Determine the relationship between social education and social change.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between social education and social justice?
2. What is the relationship between social education and social change?

Statement of Hypothesis

- Ho1. There is no significant relationship between social education and social justice
- Ho2. There is no significant relationship between social education and social change

Literature review

Social education and social justice

Social education is both a process and goal, and educators have a long history advocating its importance as a means to address inequalities related to race, immigration, and women’s rights (Crocco & Davis, 2002; Evans, 2004; Stanley, 2005; Watkins, 1993). Contemporary social studies scholars (Au, 2009; Banks, 2004; Tyson & Park, 2006; Wade, 2007) continue to promote social education as a

primary curricular and pedagogical mechanism in an increasingly globalized world and among increasingly diverse student populations. Social education helps students “unveil the world of oppression, transforming it into a just world for the purpose of empowerment” (Tyson & Park, 2006 Pg. 231). Through the process of social education, teachers help students develop what Freire (2007) termed *conscientização*, a “consciousness raising” through which students develop a socio-political awareness that helps them formulate and address questions about societal injustices and supporting structures. It is not enough, however, that students only understand that injustices are happening. They also must recognize that they are agents of change who can make a difference in the world. Therefore, following Freire’s sense of consciousness raising, awareness turns to action and transformation of the world around them.

King and Kasun (2013) argue that social justice in the social studies classroom encompasses three important principles: critical historical knowledge, critical socio-political literacy, and application with agency. According to Bassey (2010) social education, as an educational philosophy, instills values in students through the exploration and/or addressing of social justice issues. More particularly, social education develops “a new kind of citizenship education” one that encourages students to be active participants in the “fight for social change” and social justice. Social education not only requires people to acknowledge the systems of power and privilege that promote social inequality, but demands that people “critically examine oppression on institutional, cultural, and individual levels” in order to exact change (Hackman, 2005).

Social Education and Social Change

The role of social education as an agent or instrument for social change and social development is widely recognised today. When the existing social system or network of social institutions fails to meet existing human needs and when new materials suggest better ways of meeting these needs, social change takes place. Accordingly, social change occurs as a response to many types of changes that take place in the social and non-social environment (Sociology Guide, 2012). The realisation of a country’s aspirations involves changes in the knowledge, skills, interests and values of its citizens as a whole. This is basic to every programme of social and economic betterment and education is often the only instrument that can reach all affected people. It is a difficult instrument, however, whose effective use requires strength of will, dedicated work and sacrifices.

To Agrawal and Aggarwal (2011), social education is a fundamental method of social progress and reform. Social reformers have stressed the importance of social

education as the single most important instrument and medium for bringing about change in society. It is a process which enables individuals to effectively participate in the activities of society and to make positive contributions to the progress of society. Social education is of great help to people in identifying their limitations and weaknesses or gaps in knowledge and then helping them to remedy those gaps. Modern educational institutions do not place much emphasis on transmitting a way of life to the students. While traditional education may have been suited to an unchanging or more static society, education today aims to impart knowledge. Education can initiate social change by bringing about a change in the outlook and attitude of humanity. It can bring about a change in the pattern of social relationships which can then cause further social changes. Social education has been quite helpful in improving the quality of life of people. Despite its acknowledged role in social change, social education is both conservative and progressive as it does, intentionally or otherwise, transmit the culture of one generation to the next.

While social change is often viewed as a positive phenomenon, social change may in fact have negative side effects or consequences that undermine or eliminate existing (positive) ways of life. Positive social changes in Nigeria (in general) have been hampered by corporate corruption and an unwillingness to prosecute offenders. According to Dike (2012), while there are laws in place to fight corruption in Nigeria (including those laws that have been crafted by international organisations), the political will to fight corruption is still lacking. Nigeria cannot be seen as secure and free until the human rights of every citizen are respected and protected by the government. More importantly, Nigeria cannot be considered secure if the majority of Nigerian citizens lack the basic conditions necessary for a worthy existence. Nigeria cannot be considered secure if millions of people go hungry, do not have a roof over their heads, and are jobless, uneducated and/or sick indefinitely (Morrison in Dike, 2012).

Pranav (2012) opines that social education is one of the intervening variables in the phenomenon of social change. It can bring about a change in the pattern of social relationship and thereby cause social changes. One of the purposes of education is to change man and his life and living style. To change man is to also change society. As Drucker (2011) has stated that the “highly educated man has become the central resource of today’s society and the supply of such men is the true measure of its economic, military and even its political potential”(Pg.69). Social education has changed our attitude and outlook. It has affected our customs and traditions, manners and morals, religious beliefs and philosophical principles. It has removed to a great extent the superstitious beliefs and unreasoned fears about the supernatural beings. It has widened our vision and removed our narrow ideals, prejudices and misunderstandings. Social education has brought about more refined behaviour.

Methodology

The survey research design was used in this research because a small representative sample was used to draw inferences from and generalizations to a population that would have been too expensive to study as a whole. The population comprised all students of social studies unit and social works department of the University of Calabar. The population of students as at 2015/2016 was estimated to be 435 students. This population consists of both CES and NUC students. A sample of one hundred and thirty (130) respondents i.e 30% of the population was used for this study. The sample distribution in terms of department, year of study was equitable. The sample technique employed here was the stratified random sampling technique.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised 30 items and was administered on 130 respondents. A questionnaire titled Social Education as a Tool for Social Justice and Social Change Questionnaire (SETSJSCQ) was developed by the researcher using Likert -4 point scale. Values attached to them in order of importance were thus: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD). There were two sections in the questionnaire, section A demanded personal data of the respondent, section B was made up of the items which respondents were required to tick (✓) to depict their views about the research topic.

Copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researcher. The respondents completed the questionnaire and returned to the researcher the same day they were administered to ensure effective returns. The 130 copies of the questionnaire were administered and retrieved after being duly completed, thus the return rate was 100%.

Frequency and percentages was first used to analyze the demographic data (department and year of study) while mean and standard deviation were used on other variables. Out of the 130 respondents used in this study, 77 respondents, representing (58.7%) were in social works department, while 53 respondents representing (41.3%) were in social studies education. The distribution of respondents based on year of study revealed that 48 respondents (36.2%) were in their final year, 26 respondents (20.2%) were in third year, 24 respondents representing 18.6% were in second year, while 32 respondents representing 25% were in their first year. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used in testing the hypotheses.

Presentation of Results

Ho₁. There is no significant relationship between social education and social justice
 Data for testing this hypothesis were subjected to Pearson product moment correlation analysis. The results are as tabulated in table 1.

Table 1: The significance of the relationship between Social education and social justice

Variable	N	r-value	Sig.
Social education	130	0.311*	.000
Social justice	130		

*significant at 0.05 level; df = 128; critical r value = 0.048

The result in Table 1 revealed that the calculated r – value of 0.311* is greater than the critical r-value of 0.048 at 0.05 level of significance with 126 degrees of freedom. By this result, the null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant relationship of social education on social justice is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted. By this result, we can conclude that, there is statistically significant relationship between social education and social justice. The finding of the study is in line with Tyson and Park (2006) who posited that social education helps students “unveil the world of oppression, transforming it into a just world for the purpose of empowerment”. The finding is also in line with the views of Freire (2007), who opined that through the process of social education, teachers help students develop what is termed conscientização, a “consciousness raising” through which students develop a socio-political awareness that helps them formulate and address questions about societal injustices and supporting structures. It is not enough, however, that students only understand that injustices are happening. They also must recognize that they are agents of change who can make a difference in the world. Therefore, following Freire’s sense of consciousness raising, awareness turns to action and transformation of the world around them.

Ho₂. There is no significant difference between social education and social change
 The results are as tabulated in table 2

Table 2: The significance of the relationship between Social education and social change

Variable	N	r-value	Sig.
Social education	130	0.221*	.000
Social change	130		

*significant at 0.05 level; df = 128; critical r value = 0.048

The result in Table 2 revealed that the calculated r – value of 0.221* is greater than the critical r-value of 0.048 at 0.05 level of significance with 126 degrees of freedom. By this result, the null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant relationship of social education on social change is rejected while the alternate

hypothesis is accepted. By this result, we can conclude that, there is statistically significant relationship between social education and social change. The finding of this study agrees with the views of Agrawal and Aggarwal (2011) who averred that social education is a fundamental method of social progress and reform.

Conclusion

From the outcome of these research findings, it was concluded that there is statistically significant relationship between social education and social justice. This means that social education helps people transform the world of oppression into a just world. There is also statistically significant relationship between social education and social change. This means that social education can bring about a significant positive change in the pattern of social relationship with people and the environment.

Recommendation

1. For positive and effective social justice and change to take place in Nigeria, Nigeria should recognise good social education, good governance, transparency, accountability and the rule of law as the keys to such social justice and change.
2. There should be provision for articles on journals and textbooks in school libraries treating social justice and change, its impacts and the various mitigation measures to curb the problem of injustice.

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