

CULTURAL IMPROVEMENT IN NIGERIA: THE VALUE CLARIFICATION STRATEGY OF SOCIAL EDUCATION AS A TOOL

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Abstract

The paper recognises the great potentials of Social Studies education in ameliorating some of the cultural ills that are found in Nigeria. The paper identifies and places importance on societal values that must be upheld in the face of the invading foreign cultures and their attendant ills. The paper explores by way of explanation how the value clarification strategy could be used to teach the desirable aspects of the Nigerian culture.

Introduction

The general aim of education is to provide learners with the basic skills that will make them become useful and productive citizens of the society where they are found. Education at an early age is very important. Medo (2000) revealed that the first five years of life are very important because they lay the foundation of later adult life. Also Myers (1992) maintained that education is desirable since both the children's ability to learn and their actual achievement in later life are influenced by early experience. Bodley (2006) opined that it is a good idea to introduce children to the skills, values, norms and tradition of one's own culture and other people's culture early so that they can

grow with it and become used to such ideas at home, at school, or where ever the child may be found (Haralambos, 2001). Social Studies programme is a well structured programme that helps to ensure the inculcation of the virtues, norms, skills, of the different cultural groups within the country. Through Social Studies education, children become aware of the different cultural practices, languages, mode of dressing, agricultural practices within and around their communities as well as other parts of the nation.

Social Studies has been variously defined as a way of life or programme of general education, an extended civics, a simplified social sciences, a youth oriented problem solving or decision making subject, a character training or formation studies, a citizenship training or education subject, among others, by experts (Kissock, 1981). The diversity of views about Social Studies highlights its nature and therefore germane in arriving at a more generally acceptable definition of the subject. According to Osakwe and Itedjere (1993), Social Studies is aimed at cultivating in learners the knowledge, attitudes and skills for meaningful living in human society. Citizenship training is a central focus of Social Studies in all countries where it is part of the school curriculum. Secondly, Social Studies is an integrated subject featuring different degrees of integration ranging from multi-disciplinary (or within field) to fused (or beyond field). Thirdly, it is organized around the central theme of human in society or human-environmental relationships. Therefore, the social sciences, a field devoted to the scientific study of human in society forms a substantial part of Social Studies content. This explains the observation of the string (social sciences) and bead (Social Studies) relationship between social sciences and Social Studies.

Fourthly, Social Studies is concerned with human relationships in his natural and human-made environment. Therefore, the subject is not devoted to the study of humans as biological beings but as social beings. Furthermore, Social Studies has a social problem-solving focus. This is the tradition in every educational system where the subject has been introduced. Every society is faced with different problems, some of which are also universal across human societies the world over. Social Studies is accordingly aimed at helping the younger generation and the society at large in addressing such problems or

vices, including drug abuse, child abuse, environmental degradation, teenage pregnancy and sex-related diseases, prostitution, violence, religious fanaticism or intolerance, examination malpractices, and so on.

Moreover, Social Studies has youth-related problem solving or character formation emphasis. This is because most of the societal problems which the subject was designed to address are predominantly youth-related either as perpetrators or as victims or both. The children, adolescents, and school age young adults are the most vulnerable groups in society to these problems or vices. Social Studies has always been part of the core or compulsory group of subjects in the school curriculum at any level of education wherever it is introduced. It is therefore appropriate to view the subject as an element in general education studies or programme in all educational systems. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) recognised Social Studies in the Nigerian educational system as part of "an instrument par excellence for National development". On a general note, Social Studies can be defined as an integrated curriculum which draws relevant contributions from other fields or forms of knowledge on the theme of human – environmental relationships for the purpose of citizenship training.

Values

Values are taken to mean 'those standards or principles that are considered desirable by an individual or group of people'. Such standards may be moral or ethical. Justice, prudence, hard work, honesty, etc. are usually thought of by many as principles that are desirable (Akinlaye, 1996). Values are the good habits that are contagious. They are passed down through generations. Values bind us together and set us apart. Today, our society is seeing a terrible amount of lack of value. People are discriminating and being discriminated against. Nature is being destroyed, while destruction is being planned. We seem to be leaving behind a legacy of hatred and destruction for our future generations. What does our society need? It needs a value check and mind set change. People are forgetting the important values in society which we need to focus on.

The teaching of values is an important task of the Social Studies

teachers. The values of the society have to be considered and the views held by other members of a particular community. Values are ideas about what in life is important (Haralambos, 2001). Important values in society need to be built and propagandized to bring about positive changes in society that we all need. According to Khilawala (2006), important values in society include empathy, mutual respect, love, loyalty, honesty, etc.

Empathy: The most important values in life and in society revolve around empathy. How can one concentrate on co-existing on the same planet, without a speck of empathy? We need to be able to accept others for what they are, not what they can do for us. We need to stop concentrating on how we can reduce competition and focus on how we can grow together. While we all have to look out for ourselves at the end of the day, we need to remember this quote, "The day we stop fighting for each other, we stop being humans!"

Mutual Respect: It is clear; we all have our strengths as well as weaknesses. Mutual respect means having respect in our minds for everyone. Even if you are up against a person, wherein it is your honour against theirs, it is important to have mutual respect. It is this respect that makes us human. Without this respect, human beings are like animals. This respect can help us keep the balance between welfare state and social Darwinism in society. We need to respect our friends for their friendship and our enemies for their ability to be competitive and their conviction. Mutual respect is one of the important values in a relationship.

Love: This may seem surreal, but honestly, love conquers all. With love in our hearts, we feel no need to harm another. We will raise ourselves, rather than pull another down. We will focus on the similarities of opinions rather than the difference of colour, religion or sexual orientation. We will punish, but not kill. We will request but not steal. With love, we will be people and not monsters! Yes, if we want our society to be good to us, we need to be good to it, as well. After all, one gives love to get love.

Loyalty: People often forget the meaning and importance of loyalty.

Loyalty is an emotion that binds us to a person, thing or sentiment. This emotion restricts us from ever betraying that person or thing. As such, what our society clearly needs today is loyalty. We need to be loyal to each other, to shudder at the thought of speaking, or thinking negative about each other. We need this loyalty to gather the strength to stand up against something that will harm our society and to stand up for the oppressed. It is this loyalty that will bring down the global walls and make this world one big home again!

Honesty: We all claim to follow the above values in society, right? In our own way, we think we are perfect. Honesty in society is to accept yourself for what you are, and let everyone know that as well. This honesty will help you make yourself better, simply because you had the ability to admit your flaws and work towards improving yourself. It is honesty that will make others help you out, not because you need it. But, because they have flaws too, which you can help out with. This honesty will help us follow the other values in society and, truly, "heal the world"! But, you could always gain more perspective by knowing is honesty the best policy?

Social Studies teachers should therefore help students to develop the skill, method and process for analysing, clarifying and assessing their own values. In this context, Social Studies teachers' role is helping the students to make values become clearer and more so to understand, and not to implant values in them.

Method of Teaching

Approach to teaching can be viewed as a broad frame work within which teaching and learning activities are carried out. Teaching is taking as encompassing both direct and indirect ways through which we attempt to make an individual learn. Method is seen as a way to approach a problem. It is a general process to guide one in an orderly and sequence manner to achieve a set objectives. Therefore, a method is a systematic procedure planned to achieve a success. It is a planned, systematic and guide to achieving a set objectives. Method could be said to be personal since it is planned to guide a person or group of persons (Osakwe & Itediere, 1993). There are various methods of teaching Social Studies. Akinlaye (1996) opined

that there is no good or bad method of teaching in Social Studies programme, because a variety of factors are combined to determine how effective or otherwise a method is. But in this case, attention will be focused on values clarification method of teaching Social Studies, more so, techniques of teaching Social Studies with advantages and disadvantages of values clarification method.

Values Clarification

The basic concept of values clarification process is that there are no declared decision which are by nature 'right' or 'wrong' (Akinlaye, 1996). The task of Social Studies teachers is to accept students' responses, respect individual responses and decision, and avoid questions or comments that may limit thinking or prevent maintenance of an open classroom atmosphere. In this case, both the Social Studies teachers and the students are engaged in active participation for formulating and assessing values. Through specific strategies, students clarify their own values. Teacher should engage students in activities that cause them to wrestle with such issues as war, family, future and a whole range of human relationships. Teachers are supposed to remain neutral in discussions and the students will not say that someone else's values are wrong. The rights of others to different opinions are to be respected.

According to Khilawala (2006), values clarification curriculum stresses the future effects of present decisions. Values clarification also increases the awareness of the factors that influence career decisions. Values provide standards for behaviour, move people to desired outcomes, and form the basis for goal setting. An individual who is able to identify his or her own values is able to attribute worth to situations and objects and therefore, make personal satisfying choices. A lack of clarity in values and choices leads to a lack of motivation, poor decision making, and dissatisfaction. The students will found participation in the values clarification curriculum to be helpful in understanding values, their future careers, and the ways in which they define success. It forces students to think about the future and how their decisions now may affect the rest of their life. Values clarification promotes critical thinking, individual choices and informed decision. Individual values development are better equipped to adapt to society.

Values clarification can be controversial; it requires that the instructor be prepared to deal with emotional response. It is unpredictable in outcome.

There is a time and place to use value clarification. The students should be matured enough to deal with the issue that is being submitted. Teacher should always be in control of the situation and not let the students get too far off subject matter. It should be used in situations that the students have to deal with their values not just in any exercise. The students should have the right to their opinion on their own subject.

Values cannot be avoided in the classrooms, most especially in Social Studies classroom. It is a place where students and teachers should be able to examine and possibly change ungrounded beliefs and values. The major argument so far in values clarification method is predicted on the fact that the most practical way of handling ethical issues is to teach critical thinking. According to Akinlaye (1996), the approach to values clarification process involves the following steps:

Choosing: Freely from alternatives, after thoughtful reflection.

Prizing: Cherishing, being happy with the choice and willing to affirm it,

Acting: Doing something repeatedly.

In this context, Social Studies teachers' role will be of helping the students to clarify values and not to impress values on them. One of the most popular models for clarifying values in Social Studies is the 'Moral Dilemma Model' of Kohlberg (1987). The four main steps involved in the model are:

1. Confronting a moral dilemma.
2. Starting a position on the original or an alternative moral dilemma.
3. Testing the reasoning for a position on a moral dilemma.
4. Reflecting on a reason for position.

Clarifying a value on this model, 'Examination Malpractices' can be taken as topic. The teacher will introduce the topic by giving the students the real picture of 'Examination Malpractices' which could be classified under the act of indiscipline and goes totally against

the ethics of hard work. Then, the teacher guides the students to list choices of alternatives; he or she will prize and cherish choice values as the students contribute. As with sex education, children are asked their opinions on premarital sex, lovemaking, contraception, homosexuality, trial marriages, and other sexual issues. This helps the students to deal with values they have, which they may not have put much thought or consideration into.

Social Studies teachers also affirm and act upon choices by asking series of questions from the students on their choice values so as to test the reasoning for a position on a moral dilemma which is 'Examination Malpractices'. The students will be able to list the causes of this malpractice, consequences on the students and on the society at large, then the solution to the moral dilemma. Social Studies teachers will then have a reflection on a reason for a position which will bring them into the concluding part. The major advantages of values clarification method is the opportunity provided students to gain valuing skills. In addition to this, values clarification helps to foster personal growth and the development of self identity. Similarly, it stimulates the students for an active search for relevance. Moreover, values clarification promotes team spirit and conflict resolution ability among learners (Ogunyemi, 1994).

However, values clarification seeks to help students become aware of and identify their own values and those of others. It also helps students to communicate openly and honestly with others about their values. Furthermore, it helps students to use both rational thinking and emotional awareness to examine their personal feelings, societal values and behavioural pattern. Values clarification method is on the disadvantage if the teacher of Social Studies is not knowledgeable, he or she will not be able to test the reasoning for a position on a moral dilemma. In this case, there will not be any effective reflection on reasons for positions. Also, it will be time consuming and make the class un-organised if the Social Studies teacher does not coordinate the class appropriately. Okunloye (2000) opined that values clarification method of teaching Social Studies can be linked with the 'Growing theory'. Okunloye explained further that Social Studies teachers set the goals of bringing out the learners for the purpose of developing them to what they should be by undergoing series of

transformation in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The teacher then serves as a guidance, facilitator, supporter etc. to the learners in the teaching learning process. The approach to teaching method is the learner/situational approach). This will ameliorate the moral and social decadence, and culture would be valued in Nigerian society.

Culture

Culture is that complex whole which determines the totality of life of people. It is all encompassing in that it determines the way people behave; the clothes they wear, the way they talk and their conceptual perceptions (Salawu, 2009). The Nigerian Policy (1988) defined culture in a complex and integrative way. According to the policy, culture is the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in the environment, which gives order and meaning to their lives. This comprises institutional, material, philosophical and creative aspects. From the definition of culture, highlighting the role it plays in the society, it is therefore important to teach values clarification in Social Studies as a means of improving culture in Nigeria.

Conclusion

In as much as in real life situations, our decisions and behaviours are made on the bases of our values, the value clarification method would be an excellent strategy to assist people to make proper life-sustaining decisions. This is hope would help students to identify their preferences, desires, attitudes, feelings etc. with a view to evaluating and possibly changing the undergrouned ones. Social Studies teachers would therefore be required to be knowledgeable and current in its use.

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