

**DEGENERATED MORAL VALUES IN
NIGERIA: CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL
STUDIES EDUCATION**

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Abstract

The concern for a sound moral status is occasioned by the alarming rate of decline in the moral consciousness and conducts among the Nigerian citizens. This decline has become a disease eating systematically into the very veins of the country, thereby eroding away the qualities and potentials needed in the Nigerian future leaders (students). Education which is universally believed to be a powerful weapon which can be used to correct moral and values decadence in the society is probably becoming weak. Social Studies as one of school subjects which is seen as a moral-oriented and problem-solving subject is not an exception of this observation. What could have been the cause(s) of this? This paper therefore examined moral values degeneration in Nigeria, challenges this has brought to education and specifically Social Studies education and the ways out. The paper employs the analytical approach as its research method and concludes with the recommendations that learner-centered method most especially value-laden methods with appropriate evaluation techniques should be used in teaching and evaluating value-laden topics in Social Studies. Seminars,

workshops, conferences, etc. should be organized from time to time for Social Studies teachers in order to update them on the latest research findings on the subject.

Keywords: Moral values, Degeneration, Moral decadence, Value-laden methods of teaching, Social Studies Education.

Introduction

Different societies, whether simple or complex have their own moral values which are considered normal, ideal and morally acceptable. Hence, the conduct of the people of a society is regulated and controlled by the moral values. The tendency and ability to identify what is right instead of the wrong ones and as well practice it, gives it the moral virtue (Muraina and Ugwumba, 2014). Prior to the emergence of school-as a specialized agency, every human society, whatever its level of technical evolution, devoted considerable attention to transmitting its moral virtues to the young. This perhaps, makes Herbert (2013) to affirm that the aim and indeed the total aim of education should be summed up under morality.

With the emergence of schools, the society holds the teachers and other school personels more accountable for students' learning and behaviours. The school provides a transitional experience from the values and behaviours of traditional life into those required in the modern sectors of society (Akintola, 2005). Iyiola (2013) observes that the school is to teach a number of values and the complex responses the society requires which the parents, however good may not be able to give their children.

Ironically, the school which has been bedevilled to guide the child's behaviour in his/her social interaction and also aims at moulding the character of a learner may be acting on the contrary. This is not unconnected with the increased emphasis on reading, mathematics and science to prepare students for a global, technological and information based market place which seems to relegate the general well-being of students to a mere educational priority (Muriana, Abdulkadir & Belgore, 2012). Acts of immorality have become pervasive in the Nigerian society to the extent that hardly will a day

passes without both the print and electronic media harping on about some of the most serious acts of immorality occurring in various parts of the country. These acts of immorality which have eaten deep into the moral fabrics of the society and threatened its very foundations include murder, armed robbery, suicide bombings, rape, corruption at all levels, to mention but few. Education sector is not an exception of this menace. Some of the unpalatable fruits of societal moral degeneration manifesting in our educational institutions are sexual abuse, indiscriminate exposure of the body, examination malpractice, rape, cultism, prostitution, to mention but a few. No wonder, Akanbi, (2014) in a distinguished staff lecture asked some pertinent questions after assessing the situation in Nigeria "Those who are involved in these immoral acts, have they not passed through schools? What value has the educational system and policies entrenched in them?" Then, one may be tempted to say that education has not expectedly entrenched the expected values in the citizenry.

It is true that a good number of values and attitudes could be developed in the array of school subjects in the country. It is a fact, however, that very few teachers of these school subjects, pay much attention to developing moral values and attitudes. This perhaps brings out the uniqueness of Social Studies as a school subject and the main reason why it was introduced as a school subject; worldwide. As rightly observed by Akinlaye (1996), among all the subjects on the school time-table, Social Studies places so much emphasis on the development of desirable attitudes and values. In corroboration with this view, Nwaubani (1996) argued that the main attraction in Social Studies is the fact that it deals with human behaviours in influencing the attitudes and values of the young and upcoming generation. In line with these observations, moral/value education is central to the objectives of teaching Social Studies.

Unfortunately, the astronomical rate of societal degeneration and the collapse of societal morals have brought up a great challenge to the efficacy of social studies in fulfilling the main reason(s) why it was introduced and added to the school curriculum. No wonder, civic education which is an aspect of Social Studies education was introduced as probably a remedy. The pertinent questions now are; has Social Studies outlived its usefulness? What are some of the challenges

facing Social Studies in curbing immoral acts in Nigeria? What are ways out? It is on reflections on these questions that this paper emanates.

Moral Values in Nigeria

Morality as a concept is elusive and highly nebulous to give a particular definition to. In philosophy, the descriptive definition of morality is that morality is a set of conduct put forward by any actual group and acceptable by the members of that group or the society (Gert, 2012). According to Akande and Jawondo (2008), morality is referred to as behaviours or actions that are considered by most members of a group to be right. It is the principles concerning right and wrong or good and bad behaviours. Moral values however can be described as the upholding and displaying of certain beliefs, ideas, rules and regulations or behaviours which are generally considered good, right and accepted by the society and to which every member of that society is bound.

Despite the difference in the ways of life of the people of Nigeria, there are some standards or principles which are considered desirable by every Nigerian. Such standards may be moral or ethical. For example, honesty, hardwork, tolerance, respect for others, cooperation, justice, trust-worthiness, prudence, integrity, fairness, patriotism, unity, obedience to the laws, etc. are usually thought of by many as principles or standards that Nigerian society, collectively, holds as valuable, and therefore wants her members to imbibe (Ajiboye, 2003).

Degenerated moral values in Nigeria

Assessing the situations in Nigeria, it is quite unfortunate that those desirable behaviours and attitudes which were being treasured in the past in the Nigerian society are not all that treasured nowadays. Many people are no more custodians of these moral virtues. In fact, the few individuals who attempt to keep strictly to these virtues are seen as oddity (Akanbi, 2014). This implies that moral values are greatly diminishing among individuals – youths and adults in Nigeria today. Nigerian society has fallen into the abyss of moral decadence.

Today in Nigeria, vices have come to replace virtues (moral values), that is, they are taken to be the principles and standards

desirable (Wahab, 2011). These social vices which have eaten deep into the moral fabric of the society and threatened her very foundations and unity have included dishonesty, intolerance, stealing, corruption, armed robbery, murder, rape, disrespect for other people's lives and opinions, assassination, kidnapping, ritual killings, adultery, fornication, creeping incidence of homosexuality and lesbianism to mention but a few.

This extends to institutions of learning where students display many immoral acts. They lack respect for adults (mostly constituted authority) and generally lazy, unpatriotic, cheat in examinations, greedy, dishonest, callous and corrupt. Some engage in moral misconduct ranging from robbery, forgery, cultism, drug abuse and trafficking, certificate racketeering, get-rich-quick syndrome, indecent dressing, fraud, etc.

In order to alleviate various acts of indiscipline and moral decadence among Nigerians, various programmes have been pursued by various governments. For instance, the Shagari Administration (1979 – 1983) introduced the Ethical Revolution, the Buhari – Idiagbon Administration (1984 – 85) introduced War Against Indiscipline (WAI), Babangida Administration (1985 – 1993) introduced the Mass Mobilization for self-reliance, Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), Abacha Administration (1993 – 1998) introduced War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC). In the same vein, the Obasanjo Administration (1999 – 2007) introduced both the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). National Orientation Agency (NOA) was also established purposely to curb all forms of antisocial behaviours through value re-orientation programmes (Wahab, 2011).

All these governments efforts were geared towards instilling desirable social values and attitudes into the Nigerians seems to have yielded little results as people are still grossly involved in moral misconducts on daily basis. Unfortunately, these “ill” values are being passed on to the younger ones directly and indirectly. What a disaster! What are ways out?

Social Studies Education as a remedy to degenerated moral values in Nigeria

It is universally believed that Education is a powerful weapon which can be used to correct decadence especially moral and values decadence in the society through re-orientation of the people, most especially youths. In concordance with this view, the second aim of Nigeria Education stresses the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigeria society (National Policy on Education, 2004). Also, the National Policy on Education (2013) section 1 paragraph 6a identifies as one of the goals of education as the “development of the individual into a morally sound, patriotic and effective citizen”. These give the assurance of how crucial moral values and attitudes are to Education as a whole. In accomplishing this task, all the school subjects are charged with the responsibilities of developing a good number of values and attitudes in the students (Ajiboye, 2003). But, very few teachers of these school subjects pay much attention to developing values and attitudes. Most times, transmission of knowledge and skills is given more priority than development of desirable values. No wonder that at times, the best student in a particular subject may be found out to be morally bankrupt.

The suitability of Social Studies Education in promoting values and attitudes is largely based on its emphasis on the affective domain of education (Joof, 2010). The implication of this view is that Social Studies as a school subject has the potentials to contribute to the building of a sound moral society. In the midst of other objectives, social studies inculcates into the students appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hardwork, fairness, justice, togetherness, respect for other people’s lives and opinions, with the achievement of this aim, then the moral standards of young people are improved.

Furthermore, social studies teaches students how to appreciate the diversity and interdependency of all members of the country. Through this, tolerance as one of the social values is inculcated into the students, and this goes a long way in curbing intra/inter tribal and even religious crises in an heterogeneous country like Nigeria. Moreover, social studies helps students to acquire basic skills of listening, speaking, observation, calculation, analysis and inferences which are necessary for forming sound social, economic and political judgement. This is made possible when students are encouraged to

clarify their values, learn higher level of moral reasoning and learn the skills of values analysis (Odetomi, 2006).

Since values and attitudes are not things that teachers just tell their students and expect them to imbibe (they are not like facts) then, teaching methods which can help students to clarify and then develop desirable values and attitudes themselves are needed to teach value-laden topics in school subjects. In this regard, there are some appropriate approaches or methods to the teaching and development of values and attitudes in Social Studies Education. These are value clarification, value analysis, value identification, moral development approach, etc. These approaches to the teaching of values and attitudes create an environment in which children are free but guided to critically explore their own values and thus discover, or construct a personally meaningful moral system after logical reasoning (Damon, 1988).

Value clarification for instance, provides students the opportunity to gain valuing skills, change or modify undesirable behaviours and habits (Nwaubani, 1996). Similarly, it promotes team-spirit, cooperation and tolerance as well as conflict resolution ability among students. Moreso, Kirschenbaum (1992) is of the view that value clarification demonstrates that students of all levels and backgrounds could participate equally in values clarification activities and experience a sense of success and self-esteem.

As rightly observed by Neyword (2005), education is not just an information but formation. Hence, the information available in each of the school subjects should aim at forming good attitudes and cultivating permanent worthwhile habits. In line with this observation, a germane question to ask is how do we find out if good virtues have been developed in the students? Many subject teachers do not go beyond the domain of intellectual development (cognitive domain) when evaluating students. In Social Studies, evaluating instruments like observation technique, check list, anecdotal reports, etc. are used in judging values and attitudes (behaviour) of students.

Still on the foregoing, one can rightly agree with the view of Okobiah in Mofoluwawo (2011) who explains that educational planners in Nigeria perceived Social Studies as not only a means of instilling a sense of good human relationship in the general polity,

but also as an avenue for producing citizens endowed with skills, competence, moral values and reasoned judgment for the purpose of effective living, interacting, interrelating and contributing positively to the national security. But if we are to be frank with ourselves, there is still perceived decline of moral and ethical values in contemporary life. It is common to hear people around grumble that the world is in a very bad shape. That, there are incidences of corruption, exploitation, merciless, killings, terrorism, pollution, global unrest, mutual hatred and a total crisis of character (Kehinde – Awoyele, 2013). As if these were not enough homosexuality, lesbianism, rape (most especially of the young girls and aged women), day light robbery, kidnapping, to mention but few. Institutions of learning are not left out as high level of corruption, indiscipline, examination malpractice, drug abuse, cultism, certificate racketeering, campus and outside campus prostitution, indecent dressing, laziness at work, etc. pervade virtually all institutions of learning. These and many other social vices are indications of the extent to which moral values and attitudes most especially, in Nigeria have been seriously bastardized. The pertinent questions to ask now are that; is social studies education not entrenching its societal moral values again? Or has it outlived its usefulness as a school subject?

Challenges facing Social Studies in curbing moral and values decadence in Nigeria

The success of any educational programme largely depends on teachers (qualified teachers), since they are the central figures in schools. Not only this, even the quality of education that is provided to students (learners) largely depends on the quality of teachers, the corollary of which indicates that no education can rise above the quality of its teachers (Ayanwale, Wahab, and Wojuade, 2012). The quality of a teacher starts from his/her eligibility status that is, whether he/she is academically and professionally qualified to handle the particular subject given to him/her by the school authority. It is a proved fact that a teacher who is not qualified to teach the subject given to him/her would not be able to do justice to such a subject as expected, and hence the primary objectives(s) of teaching such a subject may not be achieved.

Social studies is a “child of circumstance” of the afore mentioned

observation. The nature of the curriculum of social studies coupled with lack of trained social studies teachers as at its inception led to the call of traditional subject teachers (most especially those in the field of social sciences) to teach the relatively new subject called social studies. Due to the various backgrounds of teachers who handled the teaching of social studies, the subject was variously interpreted as the study of history, geography, civic and or government (Ajiboye, 2003). This therefore becomes a problem up till now as the subject is taught by any teacher even those in languages and sciences. Hence, square peg is put in a round hole. No wonder, research reports have it that most teachers handling the subject most especially primary and post-primary institutions are not social studies experts/specialists (Atteh, 2011). When this happens, how then can the subject be taught effectively to achieve its pre-determined objectives?

Another challenge to the efficacy of social studies has to do with the receptivity of the subject. One of the initial reactions to the subject was why amalgamate subjects with well – defined content under an umbrella of social studies without a proper focus? As rightly observed by Ajiboye in Dada (1999), this situation not only affected the receptivity of the social studies curriculum, but also its status. Many social science subject teachers see social studies as a threat (rival) to their different subjects, this explains the reason why social studies has not found its way into the Senior Secondary School (SSS) curriculum. No wonder, series of immoral acts are mostly found with the senior secondary school students and these they take to institutions of higher learning where they wax stronger in immoral acts like raping, campus prostitution, drug abuse, examination malpractice, indecent dressing, cultism, to mention but few.

The way and manner in which social studies contents most especially value – laden topics are imparted unto the learners is another crucial issue worthy of note. The achievement of Social Studies largely depends on the method/approach used in transmitting the subject's content unto the students. It is quite unfortunate that most teachers including those of social studies still use traditional method (lecture method) in imparting knowledge, skills, and even values and attitudes unto the learners. In social studies education, methods like problem solving, enquiring method, discussion method, field –

trip, peer – learning method, etc have all been researched into and found effective. Social studies by its nature is more of affective than cognitive and psychomotor hence, values – laden topics in it ought to be taught with the use of value methods like values analysis method, value clarification method, moral development method, to mention just few. These methods help in the examination of values and development of desirable attitudes and values among the learners. If these aforementioned methods are used by our teachers, most especially, social studies teachers, then the moral standard of people mostly the young ones would improve for better.

The mode of evaluation of students' attitudinal performance particularly those dealing with moral values is another challenge weakening social studies in curbing moral decadence effectively among the young ones and the youth. According to Bloom's Taxonomies of objectives, three domains of learning have been identified: the cognitive domain, the affective domain and the psychomotor domain. The cognitive domain has to do with intellectual ability/development; affective domain has to do with sensing, feeling and behaving while the psychomotor domain deals with skills demonstration most especially through parts of the body. But it is a pity that schools today concentrate on the intellectual development (cognitive) of learners more, little on skills (psychomotor) and rarely in evaluation of behaviour (affective). In confirmation of this view, Dada (1999) has this to say "the paper – and – pencil test is the most common evaluation instrument used in schools today. In fact, many teachers have no other instrument beyond this". Some teachers who claim that they evaluate the affective domain in learners, use cognitive evaluation instrument to do so which is not appropriate. That a learner can define the concept of honesty correctly does not mean that he is honest. Hence, affective evaluation instrument like observation technique can be used to determine this.

As at present in schools, teachers are provided with assessment sheets where they are expected to assess learners' behaviours on a five – point scale, but it is the practice in many schools just to enter arbitrary figures for learners in order to comply with the stipulated instruction. This kind of evaluation of affective domain is worse that useless in that one can adjudge a well – behaved child negatively

while awarding high scores to badly behaved children – a practice that will surely defeat the purpose of evaluation (Dada, 1999). No wonder, institutions of learning turn out every year graduates who are intellectually sound but morally down (Bamisaie, 2009). Social studies education is more of affective than psychomotor and cognitive hence, appropriate evaluation techniques should be used in its values laden contents.

Moreover, the introduction of “new” subjects which are very related to social studies in contents and objectives into school curriculum poses a threat to the status, relevance and even continuity of social studies as a school subject. For instance, civic education which is a sub-set of social studies education was introduced not only into SSS curriculum but also into Junior Secondary School curriculum where social studies is already in existence. What can be deduced from this is probably that social studies is no more capable of promoting civic competence. Does this mean that social studies has outlived its usefulness? Has civic education come to replace social studies? These are some of the questions awaiting answers.

In order to corroborate the information gathered from texts, a mini-study was carried out on how Social Studies has been addressing the problems of degenerated moral values most especially within Oyo community. Sixty (60) inhabitants including twenty (20) Social Studies teachers were randomly selected from the three (3) local government areas in Oyo town. The findings of the mini-study show thus:

There was general consensus among the people interviewed that those desirable behaviours and attitudes which were being treasured in the past in the Nigerian society are not all that treasured nowadays. Hence, social vices is at alarming rate most especially among the younger ones and the youth. They were also of the view that secondary school students are not left out of this menace.

On the perception of Social Studies teachers as regards the efficacy of Social Studies in addressing degenerated moral values. They confirmed the potentiality of Social Studies as a school subject in contributing to the building of a sound moral society. This according to them is done through the different teaching methods used in developing appropriate values and attitudes in students. This they said has been yielding positive results among the pupils/students,

even with confirmation from their parents. Furthermore, evaluating instruments like observation technique, check list, anecdotal reports, to mention just a few are used more than before by Social Studies teachers in judging attitudes (behaviour) and values of students. Social studies teachers themselves present themselves to their students and even the society as model of good behaviour worthy of emulation.

Still on the outcome of findings, both the inhabitants and teachers interviewed implored the government to approve the teaching of Social Studies as a subject in the senior secondary school level of education as this would curb delinquent acts prevalent among adolescents.

Conclusion

As Nigeria celebrates her one hundred years of existence and as She looks back to count her success most especially in terms of material development, she should not forget to evaluate the moral lives of her citizens, is there any prospect? No matter the level of development of a country, if her citizens are not of positive moral values and attitudes, and not disciplined then, they stand to retard or even pull down the development of such a country. In a situation whereby the most cherished values and attitudes which ought to be the foundations around which development can be achieved are bastardized then, national development is endangered. In the search for way out, education has been universally agreed as a sine-qua-non to national value re-orientation and the place of social studies education in accomplishing this task has not been doubted. It has been seen as a value – laden subject which is capable of influencing desirable values and attitudes among the young and upcoming generations. To make the subject more effective in doing this, social studies specialists should be made to handle the subject in all levels of education moreso, latest approaches or methods to the teaching and development of desirable societal values as well as techniques of evaluating desirable behaviours in learners should be applied in social studies classes.

Recommendations

1. For the rich objectives of Social Studies to be achieved, henceforth, social studies specialists should be employed to

teach the subject.

2. Social Studies teachers should be aware of the fact that their subject is more of affective than cognitive, it is a moral oriented subject hence, value-laden methods like value clarification, value analysis, value identification etc. and other learner – centered methods like problem solving method, inquiry method, discussion method, to mention but few should be applied in social studies classes.
3. Affective evaluation instruments like observation technique, check list, rating scale, sociometric scale, anecdotal record, etc. should be applied when evaluating affective domain in social studies classes.
4. Teachers should be sponsored to attend seminars, conferences and workshops where recently researched strategies and methods of teaching and learning Social Studies most especially value-laden Social Studies topics would be exposed to them. Furthermore, various Social Studies evaluation techniques most especially those instruments used in evaluating affective domain would be well explained to them as regards their usage in the Social Studies classes.
5. School report cards for primary and secondary school students already have columns where scores on their behaviour and attitudes to school activities during the term could be entered. Teachers should therefore endeavour to fill these columns with all sincerity. Moreover, the columns could be expanded to include; class attendance, obedience to class teacher and school regulations, honesty, to mention but few.
6. Social Studies professional body that is, Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) should not relent in her struggling at making the government approve the introduction of Social Studies into the Senior Secondary School (SSS) curriculum, as this will serve as a motivating factor for those in Junior Secondary School (JSS). Also, delinquent acts like theft, smoking, truancy, laziness at work, prostitution, robbery, etc. prevalent among adolescents would be curbed if Social Studies is taught at SSS level.
7. And for the out-of-school individuals, there should be continuous

information dissemination through the mass-media for proper enlightenment on desirable societal values like honesty, integrity, cooperation, hardwork, patriotism, etc. And people who exhibit high moral standards should be rewarded to encourage others to do the same.

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