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## SOCIAL STUDIES AND INCULCATION OF DEMOCRATIC VALUE EDUCATION INTO JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*Nigeria is a multifaceted nation characterised by a wide range of diversity across various dimensions of its societal fabric. The presence of diversity poses a potential challenge to the cohesion and progress of the entity in question. On numerous occasions following its independence on October 1st, 1960, Nigeria has encountered challenges that posed a threat to its collective life, one notable example being the Civil War. Therefore, it is imperative to recognise the significance of imparting democratic value education to the younger generation. This study employed a historical method, in which pertinent literature on democracy and its implementation in Nigeria was consulted. This study examined the elements of democratic value education and the establishment of a sustainable learning environment within the context of Social Studies Education at the Junior Secondary School level. The study suggests the need for the implementation of a sustainable strategy to integrate democratic principles into the curriculum of junior secondary schools, specifically through the subject of Social Studies. It was additionally suggested that there should be a proactive effort in the field of education to routinely develop textbooks and other pertinent instructional resources in order to keep*

*pace with the evolving landscape of democratic values education at the Junior Secondary School (JSS) level.*

**Keywords:** Democratic value education, Social Studies, Rule of law, Civil war, National diversity

### **Introduction**

Nigeria is a prominent nation, not only within the West African region, but also across the continent of Africa. According to the World Bank (2023), the estimated population of the region is approximately 219 million individuals. The issue of inadequate governance has emerged as a significant concern for surrounding nations, as they harbour ongoing apprehensions that any disruption of law and order inside said nation could potentially precipitate severe humanitarian crises throughout the African continent. The subject of governance is a prominent concern within the many populations, ethnicities, and religious groups. The nation boasts a diverse range of approximately 250 ethnic groups, with three of these communities holding a position of prominence. The three ethnic groups mentioned in the source are Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa/Fulani (Sasu, 2022).

Preceding the Berlin Conference in 1884-1885, the Nigerian populace was comprised of diverse empires, city-states, and kingdoms, each possessing their distinct conventional administrative structures. The consequences of the Berlin Conference were highly detrimental. Ijose (2020) asserts that the convention resulted in the establishment of numerous nations characterised by incongruous cultural, religious, and ethnic factions. Nigeria serves as a representative illustration of a nation formed as a result of conference deliberations. To date, the entity has yet to fully recuperate from the adverse consequences it has incurred. The inception of democratic governance in Nigeria can be traced back to the implementation of the Clifford Constitution in 1922, which marked the introduction of political representation inside the country. Several more attempts were made to enhance political participation through constitutional reforms, such as the

Richards Constitution of 1946, the Macpherson Constitution of 1951, and the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954. Several constitutions were enacted for the people of Nigeria following their independence in 1963, including those in 1979, 1989, and 1999.

It is noteworthy to acknowledge that with the exception of the 1963 Republican Constitution, all post-independence constitutional endeavours were undertaken by military regimes (Suberu, 2019). Nigeria has experienced a transition from a parliamentary system between 1960 and 1966, to a presidential one from 1979 to 1983, and again from 1999 to the present. These two systems have significantly influenced the perceptions and attitudes of Nigerians with regard to democratic governance. Nigerians may tend to conflate civilian government with democratic governance because to the prolonged periods of military intervention in their political system from 1966 to 1979 and from 1983 to 1999 (Olaoye, 2021). It is crucial to highlight that the presence of civilian leaders in a government does not necessarily qualify it as a democracy. Several factors influence the democratic values of young people in Nigeria. This paper aims to analyse them via the perspective of the field of Social Studies.

Social Studies is an interdisciplinary academic subject that has been intentionally incorporated into the educational curriculum with the aim of fostering constructive social behaviours, promoting cultural values, and enhancing societal cohesion within the intricate Nigerian context. This concept pertains to the dynamic interplay between individuals and their intricate physical, social, political, and economic surroundings (Jekayinfa, 2017). This research will centre on the utilisation of a particular vehicle to promote recognised democratic values within Nigeria's emerging democracy. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate this matter.

### **Objectives of the paper**

The primary aim of this paper is to investigate how Social Studies could assist in the promotion of democratic value education in JSS

in Nigeria. Specific objectives are to:

- i. discuss the nature of democratic value education;
- ii. highlight impediments to democratic value education in Nigeria; and
- iii. identify ways Social Studies could assist in promoting democratic value education.

### **Concept of Democracy**

The concept of democracy has been the subject of scholarly inquiry for several centuries. The definition of this notion frequently relies on the perspectives, circumstances, and intellectual inclinations of experts. The etymology of the term 'democracy' may be traced back to its Greek roots, specifically the combination of two words: 'demos', which refers to 'the people', and 'kratos', which denotes 'the rule'. The amalgamation of these two lexical units yields the most elementary explication of the notion, namely denoting 'governance by the populace'. As per the definition provided by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, democracy is a form of governance wherein the supreme authority is vested in the populace and is exerted either directly or indirectly through a system of representation, as well as through the facilitation of impartial and unrestricted elections. This definition delineates the characteristics of democracy, encompassing a system of governance wherein the populace holds authority, power is wielded by the citizenry through their elected representatives, and the presence of regular, impartial elections ensures the seamless transfer of power. An alternative interpretation of democracy posits it as a system wherein the majority governs, with ultimate authority vested in the electorate who exercise their power either directly or indirectly through elected representatives chosen in periodic elections (Alonge, 2005). The aforementioned definitions conceptualise democracy as a system in which the majority exercises authority by means of voting.

### **Nature of Democratic Values Education**

The concept of democratic value refers to the principles and ideals that underpin democratic systems of governance. It encompasses the fundamental beliefs and norms Education is a form of instruction that instills in the recipient the democratic principles of society, including active involvement, personal motivation, proficient decision-making, and equality. These qualities prepare individuals to engage meaningfully in the governance and decision-making procedures of their community (Alonge, 2005; Ogan & Nnandi, 2019). This educational approach is founded on the recognition of individual participation as well as the notion that involving individuals in decision-making processes will have a significant influence on the quality of decision-making and learning outcomes. According to Alonge (2005), the aforementioned definition implies that the presence of democracy is contingent upon the satisfaction of certain assumptions. These principles encompass the notion of popular sovereignty, which is achieved by the conduct of free and fair elections or the implementation of a transparent process of selection. Additionally, they emphasise the need of taking into account the perspectives and opinions of all individuals, including both the majority and minority, prior to making decisions that are primarily guided by the views of the majority. Ogan and Nnandi (2019) have identified additional factors, including universal adult suffrage, the presence of an impartial and courageous electoral body responsible for conducting elections, and the existence of competitive political parties that allow any eligible members of society to participate, subject to meeting specific constitutional criteria. The implementation of the rule of law, equal suffrage, and the separation of powers is imperative. The list provided is not comprehensive, as it is contingent upon the idiosyncrasies inherent in democratic countries.

What is the definition of values? According to Bayero (2021), values can be defined as the guiding principles or standards of conduct that shape an individual's moral compass and influence their perception and understanding of many matters. According to

Bayero (2021), values manifest themselves through an individual's attitudes, choices, judgements, judgements, relationships, dreams, and vision pertaining to their existence and the world in which they exist. Based on the preceding analysis, it can be deduced that values are subjective standards that pertain to individuals' perceptions, attitudes, decision-making, and evaluations. The promotion of positive values among members enhances the efficacy of decision-making processes, facilitates the informed exercise of discretion, and accommodates individual preferences. Values serve as the fundamental underpinning of socialisation processes, which are commonly facilitated by primary and secondary socialisation mechanisms. The factors encompassed within this category consist of several aspects such as the domestic environment, educational institutions, social circles, religious affiliations, and influential individuals (Ikwumelu, Bassey, & Oyibe, 2015; Bayero, 2021). Ikwumelu et al. (2015) argue that value-based education in Nigeria is contributing to the country's progress and sustainable development, particularly due to its pluralistic nature. The internet has emerged as a significant influencer on values within the context of a progressively globalised society (Olowolagba, 2021). Internet sources, including popular platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and various others, play a pivotal role in the process of value growth. The significance of the internet has experienced a substantial growth in recent years due to its heightened accessibility and affordability. According to Olatunji (2023), the majority of internet and social media platforms lack adherence to traditional African norms, leading to a potential erosion of communal discipline. It was argued that this factor played a role in the diminished capacity of young individuals to make appropriate value adjustments.

The essential democratic ideals in Nigeria are enshrined within the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. These values have been exemplified by political actors since the country gained independence in 1960. Additionally, the sacrifices and resilience of past heroes who battled for Nigeria's freedom from

British colonial rule have also contributed to the establishment and preservation of democratic principles in the nation. The constitution establishes and acknowledges the three branches of government at both the federal and state levels. It acknowledges the federalist foundations of Nigeria's democracy as a nation characterised by pluralism. Furthermore, it enforces the implementation of state policies outlined in Chapter II, safeguards fundamental human rights, and establishes electoral institutions, the Code of Conduct Bureau, and other institutions aimed at promoting transparency, accountability, and the rule of law (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). The constitutional sources give rise to a set of democratic principles, namely liberty, equality, justice, inclusive political participation, absence of state regionalism, right to property ownership, freedom of expression, fair hearing, and freedom of movement acquisition.

Additional sources that can be recognised include political figures and political methodologies, encompassing concepts such as patriotism, trust, national unity, acceptance of diverse individuals, inclusive political strategies, and a myriad of other factors. According to Falana (2010), After careful examination of the aforementioned, Ogan and Nnandi arrived at the conclusion that Nigeria is yet to attain democratic values. The researchers reached the determination that corruption is the primary obstacle impeding the realisation of these aforementioned principles, with its detrimental consequences clearly evident in the fabric of the nation. Consequently, the paper suggests the use of education.

### **Impediments to Achieving Democratic Values**

In their study, Ogan and Nnandi (2019) observed that Nigeria has established rules, regulations, and institutions to uphold democratic values. However, they found that the concepts and processes necessary for the full realisation of these values have not yet been attained. The observation was made that there existed a significant deficiency in political, economic, and social empowerment, as these domains encompassed the development of individuals' attitudes, the fostering of institutions, and the

encouragement of constructive societal conduct. The formation of an enabling atmosphere for democracy to flourish was also seen. Moreover, it has been argued that democracy necessitates an election that is both fair and devoid of violence. In their study, Oganwu and Aina (2020) examined the imperative of fostering lasting democratic principles in Nigeria by means of Social Studies Education. The study revealed that Nigeria is seeing a decline in democratic principles due to the prevalence of anti-democratic practises. Hence, it became imperative to address the declining trajectory by means of interventions within the domain of Social Studies. The research also revealed that in cases where citizens lacked democratic principles, the presence of negative vices inside society would pose a significant threat to Nigeria's fledgling democracy.

According to Odogwu (2016), it may be argued that corruption has become deeply ingrained inside the Nigerian system, to the extent that it hampers the effective functioning of democratic governance. The act of embezzling funds from the national treasury was occurring, and the government, complicit in the scheme, found itself incapable of taking action. In the realm of contemporary politics, there arose a situation when the elimination of fuel subsidies became necessary due to the presence of pervasive corruption (Tella, 2023). According to Ekpo (2023), the utilisation of the social identity approach is detrimental to Nigeria's advancement due to the nation's fragmentation along lines of ethnicity, religion, culture, and regional affiliation. In a report by Orizei (2023) regarding the 2023 Presidential Elections, it was noted that Femi Gbajabiamila, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, expressed his belief that the elections were predominantly influenced by ethno-religious considerations rather than the candidates' qualifications and abilities.

The implications of these circumstances for Nigeria's emerging democracy seem to be grave. Nigeria's unity is profoundly impacted by the initial casualty of religion politics. The film titled 'Yes, Daddy' that was posted on YouTube, which connects Mr. Peter Obi of the Labour Party to ethno-religious



politics, has sparked significant controversy and discussion. The political landscape in Nigeria has witnessed a phenomenon where politicians, in their quest to secure electoral victories, have exploited their religious affiliations, so jeopardising the unity of the nation. This is particularly concerning given Nigeria's intricate composition as a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multicultural state. The study conducted by Olanrewaju (2018) examined the increasing phenomena known as 'e dibo ki e se obe', which translates to 'vote for cash', and its implications for the democratic process in Nigeria. The research highlighted the significant influence of poverty, unemployment, lack of patriotism, and corruption as contributing elements that undermine the integrity of democracy in the country. The author's analysis was predicated upon the correlation between poverty and political engagement. The author utilised data gathered from Edo and Ondo States.

In 2023, the issue had become widespread across the federation, leading President Muhammadu Buhari to implement a cash-swap strategy (Ige, 2023). The policy encountered obstacles due to a confluence of factors including impulsive decision-making, a deficiency in patriotic commitment among the implementers, and political discontent (Danjuma, 2023; Igbinalador, 2023). Critiquing the aforementioned policy, a rapper hailing from Kano State in Nigeria expressed his sentiments through a song, titled "Ko da kudi, ko free, Jagaban mukesu (Rarara, 2023)," which translates to "regardless of the presence or absence of financial incentives, we will cast our votes for Jagaban." Jagaban serves as the political pseudonym for Bola Hammed Tinubu, the incumbent President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, who became victorious in the 2023 Presidential Election.

### **Using Democratic Value Education through Social Studies Education as a Way Forward**

Social Studies is a multidisciplinary field that has been incorporated into the Nigerian educational system with the primary aim of addressing the intricate environmental challenges

faced by the nation of Nigeria. The field of study pertains to the process by which individuals adapt to the intricate conditions of their surroundings. Scholars have provided diverse definitions for the field of Social Studies. The intricacy, extensive range, and dynamic characteristics of the subject have potentially rendered any attempt at definition to be all-encompassing.

This section of the study examines several definitions. According to Chukwelu (2007), Ikwumelu's definition characterises it as a specialised field of study that centres on the examination of human beings and their interactions with the surrounding environment. The breadth of this topic encompasses various dimensions, including geographical, social, political, cultural, and economic environments. The field of Social Studies plays a crucial role in the advancement of a nation. The beliefs and attitudes it embodies empower individuals to uphold democratic principles. In a study conducted by Meizeobi (2010), a set of basic values was discovered, including loyalty, patriotism, tolerance, mutual trust, and independence. These ideals play a pivotal role in the cultivation of a democratic culture. According to Agbure (2010), the field of Social Studies plays a crucial role in equipping individual learners and society as a whole with the necessary knowledge and skills to actively engage in the process of nation-building.

According to the research conducted by Egbule and Eboh (2021), it has been observed that Social Studies plays a crucial role in equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills required for assuming positions of national leadership. This is in line with the findings of Odogwu (2016), who also emphasised the significance of Social Studies in providing political education to citizens. The subsequent inquiry pertains to the manner in which Social Studies fulfils these crucial responsibilities of imparting democratic value education for the purpose of fostering sustainable national development. Social Studies in Junior Secondary Schools 1-3 is designed to foster socialisation in political education among students. This is achieved through a deliberate selection of topics pertaining to Nigeria's political

history, including the activities of nationalists before independence, Nigeria's independence in 1960, the initial experiment with democratic leadership, the 1966 Coup D'etat, and subsequent military interventions that lasted for 29 years. The curriculum also addresses the impact of prolonged military rule on democratic ideals, Nigeria's democratic experiment in 1999, and various issues related to citizenship education, civic education, peace, and conflict education (Adeyemi & Salawudeen, 2020).

Various causes have had a detrimental impact on democratic values, such as instances of political violence, intimidation of voters, the practise of vote buying, the act of ballot box snatching, the influence of ethno-religious considerations on voting patterns, voter apathy, and numerous other related phenomena. These variables fall within the purview of the field of Social Studies. By implementing a well-designed curriculum development and integration strategy, it is possible to directly impart those values to students through Junior Secondary School (JSS) classes. The discipline of Social Studies aims to deliberately instill in students positive ideas and attitudes, with the intention of familiarising them with electoral matters and difficulties, so equipping them to assume the role of conscientious citizens who not only uphold democratic principles but also adhere to the legal framework of their nation. The study conducted by Ikwumelu, Bassey, and Oyibe (2015) focused on investigating the process of instilling personal values that have the potential to promote the cultivation of sustainable values within a democratic society. The democratic ideals encompassed in this context include, but are not limited to, the recognition and regard for the rights and emotions of fellow citizens, the cultivation of a sense of self-esteem, and the adherence to the principles of the rule of law. These fundamental principles oppose actions such as theft, fraud, falsehood, legal violations, electoral manipulation, political intimidation, bribery, and other behaviours that undermine democratic ideals.

Due to its inherent character as a subject that encompasses values, Social Studies can be readily tailored to impart necessary core values while discouraging negative beliefs that are contrary to

democratic principles. Ogundare and Jekayinfa (2017) have also listed a number of obstacles that impede the functioning of democracy in Nigeria. The factors to be considered encompass political apathy, the cultivation of a literate and politically educated electorate, the transformation of voting behaviour to foster more favourable democratic values rather than primitive sentiment and immediate materialistic incentives, the establishment of robust and constructive political opposition parties to enhance the vibrancy of democracy, and the reduction of the expenses associated with governance. Additional suggestions for political reforms include the establishment of a multi-party system consisting of three or four viable political parties to foster healthy competition.

Furthermore, there is a need to promote the development of independent candidature, enhance the participation of women in politics, and encourage rivalry among political actors devoid of animosity. Democratic administration encompasses a range of challenges that are effectively addressed through the discipline of Social Studies. The aforementioned aligns with a primary goal of Social Studies at the Junior Secondary School level, which is to cultivate self-assurance and a positive mindset for adulthood, foster acceptance and comprehension to navigate the diverse Nigerian society, nurture students into accountable individuals, and instill in them a sense of identity and patriotism towards the nation (Nigerian Education Research Council (NERC), 1980).

#### Conclusion

The necessity for democratic values education in contemporary Nigeria surpasses any earlier period in its complex historical trajectory. Nigeria has significant divisions among its population, characterised by opposing factions that are primarily motivated by self-interest and rooted in primordial issues within the political sphere. The proliferation of social media platforms has not contributed positively to the current state of affairs, since hate speech and societal division have become increasingly prevalent. The Social Studies curriculum in Junior Secondary School (JSS) classrooms employs a dynamic orientation and

strategy to foster the socialisation of students towards democratic values that have the potential to contribute to sustainable development.

### **Suggestions**

It is imperative for Social Studies educators and those responsible for training teachers to continually enhance their understanding of the Nigerian democracy, obstacles to its advancement, and the variables that contribute to the promotion of democratic principles. By using this approach, students at different stages of the educational system, namely those in Junior Secondary School Social Studies classes, would be provided with the chance to be exposed to democratic principles that contribute to the progress of the nation. It is advisable to promote the development of textbooks and instructional resources for Junior Secondary School (JSS) Social Studies on a quadrennial basis. This approach ensures the continual integration of contemporary knowledge and effective strategies pertaining to democratic governance and leadership. It is imperative that Social Studies educators are afforded the chance to participate in workshops and conferences, as these platforms serve as valuable chances for enhancing their expertise, competencies, and proficiencies in the instruction of democratic principles.

In addition, it is recommended that the curriculum for pre-service teachers in the department of Social Studies incorporates a greater number of field trips. This would serve to provide them with valuable firsthand experiences that expose them to the practical manifestations of democracy in action. Field outings can also serve as a means to engage students at an early age in Junior Secondary School (JSS) lessons. The implementation of the one-day governor programme in Lagos State, which aims to familiarise students with democratic principles and government, should be formalised and extended nationwide in order to foster the assimilation of democratic ideas. It is anticipated that by implementing this measure, a greater number of students would exhibit interest in embracing democratic principles in order to qualify for participation in the competition.

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