
UPHOLDING RELIGION AND NATIONAL VALUES
THROUGH SOCIAL STUDIES IN UNIVERSAL
BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The cutback of Social Studies which is the original keeper of civic issues and education on problems of deviance and social control (security education) has generated a lot of agitations and sentiments bothering on outright departure from the purposes for which Social Studies was introduced in the schools. This confusion calls for the curriculum enactors (teachers) on which method(s), techniques and strategies to be used in teaching the perceived irregular themes isolated for teaching in the Religion and National Values Curriculum. Five subjects that were merged under the new Religion and National Values Curriculum are: Social Studies, Civic Education, Islamic Studies, Christian Religious Studies and Security Education. Therefore, this paper looked at the upholding of Religion and National Values through Social Studies in the Universal Basic Education Curriculum in Nigeria. This is done by providing answers to the question of Why National Value Education and not Social Studies? The Paper also, looked at the challenges and the role of Social Studies Curriculum in restoring the National Values. The paper concludes that, it is imperative that, Social Studies should be separated

from the new religion and national values curriculum and it should be taught as a separate school subject, thus, as a value-oriented discipline, Social Studies if are properly taught, it could help the learners, to develop positive attitudes of togetherness and cooperation towards a sound and respectable nation through the transmission of appropriate national values. In line with our conclusion, the following recommendations were made- that it is imperatives for Social Studies practitioners, to have publish experiences that are both abstract and empirical, which could be useful to provide relevant information that may direct the National Value Education stakeholders to revise its curriculum, as to reposition Social Studies national as values driver.

Key words: Religion and National Value Education, Social Studies, Universal Basic Education

Introduction

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme was introduced in 1999 by the Federal Government of Nigeria as a reform programme aimed at providing greater access to, and ensuring quality basic education throughout Nigeria. The objectives of the UBE Programme include: Ensuring an uninterrupted access to 9-year formal education by providing free, and compulsory basic education for every child of school-going age under the six years of Primary Education and three years of Junior Secondary Education (Universal Basic Education, 2020).

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) was established in 1988 and four separate bodies were merged to formed Nigerian Educational Research and Development into one organization. The role of the body amongst others is to develop, review and enrich curricula at all levels and it is expected to serve as the highest curriculum developer for the Universal Basic Education programme (UBE). Subsequently, NERDC has recognized the importance of using innovative curriculum in restoring the ethical values which would help the Nigerian nation to realize its

expectations. For these reasons, the NERDC in 2014 developed and amalgamated five relevant subjects into single groups and Social Studies was grouped together with Civic Education, Islamic Studies, Christian Religious Studies, and Security Education under a new name “Religion and National Values Education”.

The introduction of the new Religion and National Values Curriculum in Nigeria came as a result of the recommendation made by the Presidential summit on “Restoration of Education Quality” which was carried out in October, 2010, on the implementation of the Basic Education Curriculum which called for an urgent need for the review of the curriculum to achieve a reduction in the number of subjects offered at the Basic Education level (primary 1-6 & JSS 1-3) without compromising the quality, and as well meet global best practices. To this effect, the implementation of the revised 9-year curriculum on Religion and National Values take effects in September 2014 in all public, private primary and Junior Secondary schools across the country (NERDC, 2013).

The questions of why National Value Education and not Social Studies? Came as a result of sudden removal of Social Studies which was the original custodian of civic issues and education on problems of deviance and social control (security education) based on the 2014 curriculum of the Universal Basic Education.

First, the confusion came as a result of Politics in education: The history of National Policy on Education has five editions so far: 1977, 1981, 1998, and 2004, 2007 and 2013. Social Studies enjoyed highest-level recognition in the first three editions as it was made compulsory at the Junior Secondary School (JSS) and a core-elective at the Senior Secondary School (SSS) level (Ogunyemi, 2010). However, for political reasons, the Senior Secondary School curriculum remained a lame-duck until it was finally blanked out by the Nigerian government through the 2004 and 2007 editions of the NPE (Ogunyemi, 2010). Accordingly, in the latest edition of the National Policy on Education (NPE), Social Studies has lost its place within the SSS curriculum and replaced by a new program of Civic Education. Consequently, Civic Education has also been introduced to co-exist with social studies at the primary and junior secondary school levels (NERDC, 2007 in Ogunyemi, 2010). To Mezieobi (2012),

Mezieobi (2016) and Jekayinfa (2018) and Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN, 2020) the introduction of National Value Education Curriculum has generated a lot of agitations and sentiments bothering on complete disappearance from the purposes for which Social Studies was introduced in the schools and also generated confusion for the curriculum implementers (teachers) on which method(s) to use in teaching the perceived erratic themes isolated for teaching the new curriculum.

Furthermore, the above manifestations come as a result of non- functionality of Social Studies to inject functional education in the learners. Ogunyemi (2010) & Mezeobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2013, p.3) confirmed these augments by stating that “Social Studies in Nigerian schools and colleges has failed in its educational mission in Nigeria”.

Consequently, Jekayinfa (2018, p.2) conformed by adding that, “from our pool of knowledge and experiences as Social Studiesists, there is urgent need to look at how we can make Social Studies curriculum more effective and relevant to meet up the need and aspiration of the learners.” Thus, she adds that, for many decades, Social Studies has been challenged and plagued by several factors, unable to achieve the purpose for which it is set to achieve” Adedigba and Wahab (2016) blame the collapsing societal morals of Nigerians on failure and ineffectiveness of Social Studies in fulfilling the main reason(s) why it was introduced and added to the school curriculum. Therefore, this paper looked at the Upholding of Religion and National Value Education through Social Studies in the Universal Basic Education Curriculum in Nigeria by providing answers to these key questions: What are reasons behind the Inclusion of Religion and National Values into Basic Education Curriculum? Why not Social Studies? What are the challenges facing the subject in achieving its desired role and how can Social Studies restore the expected national values? Finding answers to these principal questions constitute the primary focus of this paper.

Values defined

It is difficult to define value and values to the taste of every individual. This is because of its relativity to individual and circumstance.

However, in the background of Social Studies as conceived, the following definitions of value and values would suffice; Values involve criteria against which we judge the worth of things, objects and action (Ovute, Onyeka, & Ihekwoaba, 2018). However, Value is a good or worthwhile concept, an idea that motivates relationships and binds individuals together within the framework of a society (Kazi 2004 & Kazi, 2007). In the same vein, Value is conception explicit, and distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group of the desirable, which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of actions. On the other hand, values according to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2006) are beliefs about what is right and wrong. What is important in life for instance, traditional values of education in Nigeria are the inculcations of discipline and dedication. Therefore, Values are deep seated beliefs that influence people's actions and behaviors. Also The National Orientation Agency, (2009) in Bassey, Undiukeye and Undeshi, (2016) states that values are necessary ingredients of every person, group and indeed the entire nation on which every individual must have knowledge of for instance, Nigerian core values which shall serve as the driving engines for growth and development of the country. Values also, are societal rule which emerge from one generation to another for the good and benefit of individuals and the society as a whole (Saleh, Ademola & Damulup, 2011). To this end, Social Studies classroom has concern over three distinct values behavioural values, which concerned with the classroom behaviours that Social Studies students most imbibe. Second, procedural values, which deal with beliefs and they promote the achievement of certain goals among learners of Social Studies and third, substantive values, which deal with the promotion of independent and critical thinking that lead to the development of individual (National Teachers Institute, 2019).

Nigerian National Values

The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 23 for purpose of clarification stated that national ethics (values) shall be: Discipline, Integrity, Dignity of Labour, Social Justice, Religious

Tolerance, Self-reliance and Patriotism (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999).

The following are brief explanations of national ethics or values for the avoidance of doubt however: Discipline: This suggests a systematic manner of behaviour. It also implies self-discipline which requires exercising command over one's own impulses or needs; Integrity: This means adhering to moral values. It also refers to being morally upright, that means incapable of being bribed or morally corrupted; Dignity of Labour: This is also known as dignity of work, it is the concept that all types of jobs are respected equally, and no occupation is considered superior or inferior; Social Justice: Social justice is the equal distribution of resources and opportunities, irrespective of your status or background. It also refers to the process of ensuring that individuals play their roles in the society effectively and also receive what is their due from society; Religious Tolerance: This means putting up with other peoples' religion without rancor or allowing other people to have or practice other religions and beliefs other than our own. In Nigeria where the constitution says the country is a secular state, religious tolerance would mean that the government allows all religions to be practiced; Self-reliance: this means relying on our own efforts, powers, resources and abilities as compatriots for development; and Patriotism: This means devoted love, support, and defense of one's country (Falade and Falade, 2013, & Akpan & Okoro, 2016, Ajitoni & Omoniyi, 2017).

These values are the doctrine predestined to compel on all Nigerian as stated in the overall philosophy and goals of the Nigerian nation which are to: Live in unity as one indivisible, indissoluble democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice; and Promote inter- African solidarity and world peace through understanding (National Policy on Education, 2013). Teaching these values at the UBE level means inculcating right values at the right age to the right people using comprehensive value-laden Social Studies programme.

Religious Education in Nigeria

The teaching of religion and civic values is not new in Nigeria. Religious education was introduced into the Nigerian school

programme through the activities of the colonial government in the 18th century (Fafunwa, 2004) and missionaries in the 19th century (Falade, 2016). Both Islamic and the Christian religious studies were part of the school curriculum (Falade, 2016). For instance in 1876, the first Christian Missionary secondary school (C.M.S Grammar School) was established in Lagos, subsequently the first known Muslim primary school was established by the colonial government in Lagos in 1899 and the first one to be established by the Muslim themselves was in 1922 (Fafunwa, 2004). Since then, Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) and the Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) have been part of the school subjects in Nigeria. Today, IRK and CRK are compulsory subjects for students in primary and junior secondary schools to pick one of them (Falade, 2015). In a nutshell the teaching of religious study is to develop in the students values such as spirit of forgiveness, honesty, modesty, respect, love, kindness, justice, fair-play, obedience, and devotion to duty, orderliness behavior and selfless service to Al mighty Allah God (Itulua-Abumere, 2013, Adeyinka, Okeke & Orebanjo, 1991 in Falade, 2016, Lawal & Laaro, 2018). Religions are instruments that are used for the transformation of the Nigerian values in the last one decade.

Civic Education in Nigeria

The teaching of civic education in Nigeria had a long history but it was recently developed as a compulsory school subject. Civic education was officially introduced into the Nigerian school curriculum on September 2008 with its curriculum prepared by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (Omoloso, Fademi & Popoola, 2016).

The following are the synopsis on development of civic education and divided into two main categories thus:

The Informal and Single Subject era: Civic training is not a recent development in Nigeria. Before Nigeria came into existence in 1914, civic education was part of the informal or traditional education in the different localities that were merged together as a single nation while during the colonial era and shortly after the

Nigeria independence, civics was taught as a single subject in the Nigeria elementary schools (Falade & Adeyemi, 2015).

Integrated, Disarticulation and Harmonization era: After the Nigeria independence in 1960, it was discovered that the inherited school programmes were foreign in nature. They had little or no relevance to the prevailing problems and situations in the country. As a result of this, there was the need to revamp the school curriculum. The search for the kind of school programme that could develop the citizens with knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to be useful to themselves and the society at large led to the introduction of the integrated Social Studies. Later, The Nigerian government started a 9-Year Basic Education Programme in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The 9-Year Basic Education Programme was also to form a new school subject called Religion and National Values. In the harmonization era of October 2010, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria convened a National Stakeholders Forum to deliberate on the State of Education in Nigeria. Delegates at the summit called for immediate action to reduce the number of subjects offered at the Basic Education level. Consequently, in 2012, NERDC was directed to review the 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC). In view of this, other related UBE school subjects were merged to form new subjects called Religion and National values Education (Falade & Adeyemi, 2015).

The following are the objectives of civic education: Encourage the understanding of the inter-relationship between man/woman, the government and the society; highlight the structure of government, its functions and the responsibilities of government to the people and vice-versa; develop the teaching and learning of emerging issues and instill in students their duties and obligations to the society, create in Nigerians an awareness of the provision of the Nigerian constitution and the need for democracy in Nigeria, create adequate and functional political literacy among Nigerians (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council NERDC, 2009).

Factors Necessitating the Inclusion of Religion and National Values into Basic Education Curriculum

In every nation education is a mechanism that is used for national development and social change (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013). Two main factors were responsible for the inclusion of national values in basic education curriculum.

The National Council on Education (NCE) in 2005 mandated Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council NERDC to produce a viable curriculum to meet national and international goals (including National Economic Development and Empowerment strategy NEEDS, EFA & Millennium Development Goals MDGs). The objectives of the National Economic Development and Empowerment strategy (NEEDS) encompasses Value re-orientation, Poverty eradication, Job creation and wealth generation, using education to empower the people. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was launched in September 2000; targeted 1990 to 2015, 189 signatory countries (including Nigeria) were expected to create effective implementation strategies and structures for the internationally agreed framework of goals and 18 targets to stimulate global development. The education sector is concerned with MDGs 2, 3 & 6. The highlights of these goals were: to Achieve Universal Primary Education, Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women, and to Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (Oji, 2012).

The pressing Social problems includes the recent internal and global increase in corruption, crime, terrorism and militarism, rape, robbery, kidnapping, child and human abuse of all sorts, others are: poor leadership, lack of moral integrity, indiscipline, materialism, selfishness, intolerance and uneven distribution of wealth and collapsing moral values and other antisocial vices. When national values is taken over by social sins the citizens pursue wealth without knowledge, without character, pleasure without conscience, commerce without morality, worship without sacrifice, science without humanity and politics without principles ((Fadeiye, 2004, Oderinde, & Yusuf, 2012, Akpan & Okoro, 2016, Kazi, 2016, Olayiwola, 2013 in Abdu-Raheem, 2018, Awaisu & Bashir, 2018). To this end, Obioma (2012) explains that, the highlights of Religion

and National Values are: The inculcation of the virtues of honesty, regard and concern for the interest of others, justice, discipline, right attitude to work, courage and national consciousness.

Why Not Social Studies?

Social Studies should have two purposes which include the enhancement of human dignity through learning and commitment to rational process as the principal means of attaining the end, and that it should be an education programme which provides the learners with knowledge, abilities, attitudes and skills that will equip them to participate intelligently in social and civic events that surround them (Jekayinfa, 2015 in Jekayinfa, 2018). Social Studies as a subject is destined to develop in learners the right type of values, attitudes and socially acceptable behaviours such as honesty, dedication, hard work, respect for elders, loyalty, and respect for human dignity among others (Oluwagbohunmi & Alonge, 2019). The objectives of Social Studies are stipulated in the National Policy on Education and these are “the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society” (The Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013). Therefore, the aim of Social Studies is to inculcate desirable social habits, attitudes and values needed for the survival of the individual in the society (Lawal & Oyeleye, 2003). These aims can only be achieved through a process of studying human beings, relationship with his or her environment, student’s awareness of individual values and Social Values of the environment and with the desire to provide solutions to various complements problems in order to ensure human survival, having been equipped with the necessary tools such as values, attitudes, skills and knowledge (Lawal & Oyeleye, 2003). For that reason, Adebayo, Olatunde & Obaje (2016) noted that, curriculum of Social Studies evolved on the belief that, education should positively influence and modify the learner’s behaviour in the direction of acceptable and current socio-cultural order. The school serves as a centre for students to learn social participation directly and not symbolically. To this end, Social Studies as a value-free and value-laden subject that has the capacity to build sound morals and integrity in all facets of the society, it serves as an aid to changing

the value, system of the people, and as a means of re-appraising undue obsession to materialism and primitive wealth accumulation which is the mania that is somehow responsible for corrupt practices in the society which invariably thwart national transformation (Edinyang & Usang, 2012 in Jekayinoluwa, Egbetola, Akinwande & Olowu, 2018).

Challenges of Social Studies Curriculum in Universal Basic Education

So many factors are responsible for the failure of Social Studies to achieve its desired objectives in Nigeria. For instance, in a study by Awhen, Edinyang, & Ipuole, (2014) in looking at success or a failure, Social Studies in Nigerian schools using 279 teachers teaching Social Studies in 253 secondary schools in Cross River State of Nigeria, it was discovered that Social Studies had not really achieved its goal(s) in Nigerian schools. The study also, revealed that greater percentage of the teachers with (59.50%) agreed on its failure than its success. The reasons for the above failure are attributed to numerous factors: Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2008) confirmed lack of operational definition of Social Studies with more than twelve different definitions of Social Studies. Along this problem, Jakayinfa (2018) identified three different categories of definition of Social Studies, with other definition 21st century definition and forthcoming or future definitions of Social Studies that are available in literature. On the challenges of Social Studies, Jakayinfa (2015) identified three major components to include Social Studies curriculum process which she believed as very weak. The components are: Social Studies teaching methods, Social Studies instructional materials and resources, and Social Studies instructional evaluation devices and techniques, even including teaching methods aims (Adesina, 2010; Bennel, 2004 in Abdul Kabir, 2014; Onyeachu, 2008 cited in Ahmed & Lukman, 2015). Moreover, Achime (2004) in Meziobi, Oyeoku & Ezegbe (2012) & Idowu (2017) confirmed over reliance by Social Studies teachers' on expository teaching approach as hindrance to the effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum and Mezieobi (2003) in Mezieobi & Mezieobi (2011) reported that over ninety (90%) percent of all the Social Studies teachers largely use the

expository/presentation teaching method in their classroom interactive process in which teachers are sheer dispenser of knowledge without learning guide, for the student-clientele who listen in passively. Similarly, Ogundare (1984) & Okam (2002) in Idowu (2017) confirmed that negligible number of Social Studies teachers (less than 20%) use appropriate methods-investigative-oriented procedures and approaches in their instructional strategies, in the Social Studies lessons.

To this end, Ogunyemi(2007) in Ogunyemi (2010) reported on the sense of inferiority reported by pre-service Social Studies teachers:-

may have been confounded with the removal of the subject from the secondary school curriculum where it was (nominally) listed... Government seems to have bowed to pressures from the separate subject specialists, particularly historians, and this is bound to reverse the gains made in the development of qualitative social studies teacher education way back from the 1960s (p7).

Role of Social Studies Restore the Expected National Values

As a value-oriented discipline Social Studies are taught with religious studies in schools as elective subjects at both primary and junior secondary levels (Gabriel, 2008). The values of Social Studies include: Factors relating to the social environment, physical environment, cooperation and conflict, integrity and justice, honesty, tolerance, hard work, service to the people, civil rights and responsibilities, culture and identity, truthfulness and a wise use of resources, cultural patterns, and common heritage and national symbols (Fan, Akpan, Martha & Magret, 2008 in Abdul Kabir, 2014). Furthermore Adedigba & Wahab (2016) confirm on the suitability of Social Studies in promoting values and attitudes with emphasis on the employment of affective domain of education. 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. Good value system ultimately produces good and sustainable development while bad

value system produces bad, weak and unsustainable societies (Olayiwola, 2013 in Abdu-Raheem, 2018).

To this end, the expected role of Social Studies in restoring the Nigeria National Values according to Famwang (2003) and National Teachers' Institute (2019)

A society develops Social Studies Curriculum based on its social situations-the prevailing needs of the society; the prevailing social, political, religious or even economic problems; the prevailing and perceived changing needs aspiration and ideological change or a shift in social philosophy of the society (Famwang, 2000).

However, in a situation like this, more often than not, a society uses Social Studies to change the societal focus.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that if Social Studies is taught as a separate school subject and properly taught, it could help the tenets, to develop positive attitudes of togetherness and cooperation towards a sound and respectable nation through the transmission of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness, justice, and fair play as one's contribution to the development of the nation and the creation of awareness in the learners that discipline is essential for an orderly society.

Way Forward

In order to fulfill the aspiration and the desires of the naissance fathers of Social Studies, the following according to Jekayinfa, (2018), Mezieobi & Brown (2017) are recommended for future development of the programme: It is imperatives for Social Studies scholars, to have full knowledge and experiences that are both abstract and empirical, which could be useful to provide relevant information that may direct National Value Education stakeholders to revise its curriculum, to make value education to retrace its root to Social Studies and seek new line of actions to reposition itself; and Social Studies contents should be designed to include work ethics, dedication, honesty, national ideals and values, democratic principles, skills for data collection and analysis, decision-making process and problems solving and Students should be taught

to show commitments, demonstrate knowledge and skills and how to participate in national economic and democratic activities.

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