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VALUE EDUCATION IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY:  
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL STUDIES

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**Abstract**

*Nigeria is a pluralistic society with diverse religious and ethnic entities, each of these religious and ethnic groups have their individual value systems that are always in conflict with the values of other groups in the Nigerian society. Thus, in order to promote value education in a pluralistic society such as Nigeria there must be a well laid out plan of action to gradually train the individual through early and lifelong education. Proper planning of educational curriculum to guide the process has become imperative, considering the total loss of the value system in Nigeria; this will help to guide the future of every Nigerian child. This theoretical paper was based purely on secondary sources of information such as journals, websites, conference papers and books. The paper discusses value education in a pluralistic society and the aim of providing a blue print on how Social Studies can be used as a guide to direct the process and provided an understanding of value education. Suggestions for inculcating value education into Social Studies were also made.*

**Keywords:** Value Education, Pluralistic Society, Social Studies and Nigerian society.

**Introduction**

There is no gainsaying that the educational community today is faced with the endless challenge of bestowing proper value education on the Nigerian child, the challenge of imparting values in pupils and students by teachers is enormous and huge bearing in mind the total breakdown of the value system in Nigeria. Dorgu, Nemine and Olu-Obafemi (2019) posited that presently, there is a degeneration of the value system in Nigeria and this has made human life to become worthless, caused religious and ethnic disharmony, lack of respect for parents, institutions and government, total breakdown of law and order, drugs and substance abuse, negative and deviant behaviours, corruption, lack of skills, armed robbery, kidnappings, terrorism and general insecurity in the country. The leaders and the led totally lack any sense of values as the government have proven to be dishonest and therefore cannot be trusted by the led.

Ayua (2018) opined that the state of lawlessness in the Nigerian society and the total disregard for national values will degenerate further and may likely get worse without a properly planned and implemented value education that is functional. To tackle these problems or to minimize them to the barest, it is necessary to teach values education in our schools. A good and practicable value education bequeathed on our children through Social Studies will produce future Nigerians that will have good sense of values to live in a peaceful and lawful society.

The breakdown of Nigeria's value system can be attributed to numerous factors among which is the failure of the family institution which is the first agent of socialisation to the child, other factors are widespread corruption and emphasis on materialism, failure to implement the educational curriculum and the vast spread of technology. Pushpanathan (2013) argued that the extraordinary changes introduced by technological and scientific advancement has a devastating effect on our collective value system, social and cultural circumstances of all nations across the globe.

The word value connotes something of worth or highly cherished. Values are codes and standards of behaviour required by a particular culture or people, these values guide their conscience

and conduct with one another (Pushpanathan, 2013). Lakshmi and Paul (2018) defined value as the belief about what is wrong or right and identifying the most important things in life. Hence it is imperative for good values to be instilled into the mind of an individual from childhood for the individual to have the skill of differentiating between what is good or bad. Similarly, Sahin (2019) saw values as the abiding belief that expresses behaviours which are socially and personally accepted. In another definition by Erden (2003) values reflect the desires, wishes and preferences that the individuals in a society regard as important (as cited in Sahin 2019, p. 75). Amaele (2009) implied that value may be social, religious (spiritual), moral, economic or political, by implication values are of major concern to all aspects of society because every day we are involved in making value judgments in our actions or inactions. Values are principles that guide our conducts, they are desirable attributes which a society approve and are conveyed from one generation to the next.

Value education is a procedure of teaching and imparting the values of society that are regarded as ideal and good, to the individuals of that society. Value education is deeply rooted in every culture and group in a society; it can be an informal process through which the elderly ones are expected to give moral values to the younger generation. Value education can also take place in educational institutions and other organisations in the society. Lakshmi and Paul (2018) pointed out two major forms of value education they are the teaching of value that emanate from religious, educational, cultural and social practices of society and self education of the individual through the realisation of the importance of good values and behaviour by the individual.

Gulati and Pant (2016) posited that the whole of educational endeavour is extricable connected to value development, for example peace and security in the society will be threatened without proper value education, thus the malleable period of training young individuals is crucial, because whatever value that is imbibed will determine the type of life the pupils/students' will live in future. In a similar view, Atubi (2020) emphasized the importance of value education through the use of Social Studies in combating insecurities.

Thus Social Studies can be used to promote value education since it has become critical due to the insecurities pervading the nation.

Value education can take place in schools, homes, religious centres and informal institutions. Value education is good because it prompts people to work hard, behave responsibly and become successful; it also promotes the usefulness of individuals to their societies. Dorgu, Nemine and Olu-Obafemi (2019) established that value education is a requirement for social reforms in a pluralistic society like Nigeria; they also posited that education is the major instrument that can be used to achieve these reforms through the teaching of values. Value education will enlighten children and youth as it will help them to modify their values, beliefs and dispositions to life. It will also enable them to have sound reasoning, shun violence; promote cooperation and peaceful coexistence.

A pluralistic society is one in which the people can publicly and legally parade multiple cultural views and values, Nigeria is a country with about two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic nations and four hundred (400) different languages. The language, culture and ethnic composition has become enlarged, the differences that manifest in the religious, cultural, political, economic and social aspects of the country has made Nigeria a pluralistic society. Nigeria as a pluralistic society is presently affected with enormous crisis from religious, political and socio-ethnic disharmony. Oghole and Adeale (2013) decry the lack of values in the Nigerian pluralistic society, they explained the need for a religious dialogue to harmonize our values and bring peace to the nation. They also recommended that all forms of bias, misconception and stereotyping be stopped. Oghole and Adewale (2013) also explained that pluralism is used within the context of a society when different groups within a society or country retain their unique cultural behaviours, values and practices while maintaining their commonalities. In pluralistic societies, the various groups do not just coexist with each other; they also integrate the culture, values and practices of other groups in the society. When groups in a society function separately from others or they are in competition with each other, they cannot be regarded as culturally pluralistic but multicultural. Hence for a

society to be considered pluralistic there must be integration and some level of similarities in their cultures.

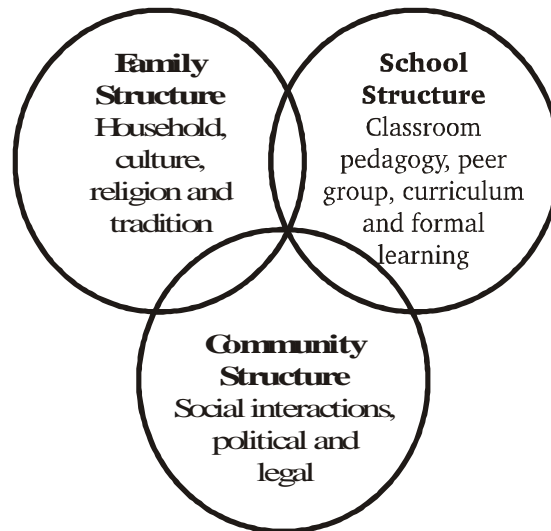
From the foregoing, this characteristics gives Nigeria the status of a culturally pluralistic society, therefore there is an enormous task inculcating lasting values that will be beneficial to all Nigerians. According to Atubi (2019), the subject Social Studies is very essential in the development of citizens who are well behaved and socially responsible with values. A major objective of Social Studies is to inculcate in young citizens positive values, attitudes and skills, the knowledge of societal norms and to express these values. Hence, the only subject that can be judged qualified to deliver value education in Nigeria today is Social Studies.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To explain the meaning, need and aims of value education
2. To explain how value education can be achieved in a pluralistic society like Nigeria
3. To examine the role that Social Studies can play in providing value education
4. To suggest ways of inculcating value education into Social Studies programme in Nigeria

### **Value Education Concept**

The concept of Value education is concern with educating people on suitable conducts, behaviour and habits. Ikwumelu, Mbang and Oyibe (2015) pointed out that value education has cognitive inclination that must not be sideline because of its role in giving the learner the skill of making sound moral judgement that is built on genitive reasoning. The cognitive aspect of value education is very important and should be carefully cultivated in children and young adults. Lakshmi and Paul (2018) explained that education on values should not be left to the school alone, but that value education can be achieved through three structures – the family, school and the community.



**Figure 1:** Source: (Adapted from Lakshimi & Paul, 2018).

The structure of value education in the figure above shows that value education is a complex process that involves not just the school, but the family and the entire community in which the child resides. This author is making a clarion call for implementation of value education in Nigeria's educational institutions from primary to secondary and tertiary schools, in the family and communities. This will enable pupils and students to understand moral values and awareness concerning contemporary issues and contribute to the growth and development of the society. Value education needs to be promoted to reorder human societies and the dignity of man as this has been eradicated due to the decline in traditional values. Value education will also be helpful to students in circumstances where they will need to make some complicated fast decisions; the good value that they must have learnt in Social Studies will help them in achieving good results. Furthermore, value education is critical to fight the increasing rate of crime like killings for ritual purposes, advance fee fraud, armed robbery, kidnappings and many other crimes being recorded everyday by juveniles and youths in Nigeria, as this will help them judge themselves and situations critically.

before taking actions. Overall value education will aid and encourage national and social integration while helping individuals to differentiate between what is morally right or wrong.

Lakshmi & Paul (2018) identified the following aims/objectives of value education, they include; cooperation, respect for the culture of others, inculcating good manners, taking responsibilities, respect for the sanctity of life, the individual and the society. Other objectives of value education include; building the spirit of patriotism and helping independent thinking in young people. Puja (2020) in a similar vein identified five objectives of value education. These are:

- a. to develop the inherent characteristics of people
- b. to improve the attitude of individuals for a sustainable lifestyle
- c. to teach individuals about the history and cultural heritage of their country, their rights, privileges and national development
- d. to create the awareness of values, their roles and significance in the society
- e. to study about the interaction of living and non-living things in our environment, it teaches us the need to place value on these organisms in order to protect the environment



**Figure 2: Source, (Adapted from Sahin, 2019).**

Fig 2 explains the major aims of value education among many other objectives, if these aims and objectives can be achieved, we should be able to build a solid foundation of values for our beloved country. Value education will raise patriotic and cooperative Nigerians that can take up responsibilities for the overall good and betterment of the Nigerian society.

### **Value Education and a Pluralistic Society**

Nigeria which happens to be a pluralistic society is distinct, the political, economic, social and religions landscape is connected with many different groups and interest and each of these groups have their diverse value and rules that govern them. The values and rules are often in contrast with those of other groups (Ikwumelu, Mbang & Oyibe 2015). According to Atubi (2019b), these contrasts are also reflected in elections and politics as observed by a study on the challenges observed in Nigeria's elections. Elections in the country have always revealed how pluralistic and divided Nigeria really is, this calls for crucial intervention with strategies such as the use of value education. Value education has been substantiated as a framework for solving problems associated with pluralism in many developed countries of the world, yet one cannot understand why successive administrations in Nigeria seems to ignore value based education.

The inherent values in the nation's constitution need to be highlighted and propagated through the promotion of value education. There are certain core values that citizens in a pluralistic and democratic society must internalize if such society must survive. These values according to Gulati and Pant (2016), include the rule of law, worth and dignity of human life, promotion of equity and justices, respect for personal freedom, religion and social tolerance, sense of self reliance, patriotism and imbibing the spirit of brotherhood. Other core values are respect for the government principles and policies, these core values represents the aspirations of those that found the nation, but these values seems non-existence today, therefore educational institutions as agents of change must rise up to the occasion because these values are the very heart of a pluralistic society.



### **The Role of Social Studies in Achieving Value Education**

Atubi (2019c) posited that the bedrock behind the development of developed nations around the globe is education; education has always been regarded as a tool of achieving transformation and development of nations and society. Therefore Social Studies as an educational programme have a key role to play in actualizing value education in Nigeria. Allodi (2007) in like manner attested to the fact that there is a vital role for Social Studies in accomplishing value education because the aims and objectives of Social Studies in Nigeria have a nexus with that of value education. A very important part of Social Studies objective in Nigeria is the development of positive values, attitudes and skills; these are also key components of value education. A major role of value education also is developing the spirit of patriotism and national identity in learners; this is also an objective of Social Studies. To understand better the nexus between Social Studies and value education, let's take a look at the objectives of Social Studies education programme in Nigeria. They are: to assist man in the acquisition of skills in solving societal and environmental problems; to influence man's positive attitude to political, cultural, economic and social values; to create man's awareness and sensitivity to his environments; to encourage civic participation and develop a sense of responsibility and patriotism; and to develop man's capacity to learn and acquire observational and analytical skills

A careful examination of the Social Studies objectives will show that they are heavily loaded with issues that are value related. Developing a sense of responsibility and patriotism, is imperative for value integration in the development of a nation. Frelin and Grannas (2010) stated that an objective of value education is creating in children the awareness and need to value their environment. This is the same as Social Studies objectives of assisting man with the acquisition of skills in solving societal and environmental problems. Thus Social Studies/Value Education should help children to have a worldview, appreciate the merits of diverse cultures and understand the fact that conflict in any part of the world will make the world unsafe to dwell in.

Furthermore the cognitive, affective and psychomotor dimensions contained in Social Studies program makes it a perfect tool for value education, because the well educated individual in Social Studies, should be able to think the value, feel the value and act the value in an acceptable manner. This will help personality development as it concerns attitude and values, as values are also concerned with knowledge, feelings and actions. The point that is being made here is that value education is a multi dimensional enterprise just as Social Studies is multi dimensional in nature. Finally Social Studies is character based which help children to develop their character and social life. These include developing emotional learning, moral education, cognitive development, skills acquisition, peace and violent free society; conflict resolution, critical and ethnical reasoning. Considering the huge benefit of Social Studies as explained above and its relationship to value education, Social Studies is the only subject in the school curriculum that the cap fits to implement and propagate value education in a pluralistic society like Nigeria.

### **Suggestions for Inculcating Value Education into Social Studies**

Ikwumelu et al (2015) put forward five suggestions and ways through which Social Studies teachers can teach value education in their teachings: teachers must teach pupils/students how to put others into consideration with respect to certain principles such as equity, dignity, kindness, courtesy, sympathy, cooperation and altruism; teachers should also create the awareness in pupils/students about their own feelings and the resultant effects of their actions. Putting themselves in the position of others just like the popular saying “do unto others as you would like them to do unto you” by using virtues such as nobility and magnanimity; teachers should also teach pupils/students the ability to use accurate data to make the right decisions concerning issues of morals and value, ability to analyse facts and take positive and possible actions; teachers should teach moral education and imbibe decisions which involve wisdom, patience, endurance and justice; and teachers should spur

learners up to act on their decision to be courageous, fearless and responsible while displaying positive values.

Social studies teachers must have strong values themselves, before they can impart good values to the learners, this is because one can only give what they have and except the teachers themselves have positive values that guide their actions, they won't be able to help pupils and students develop positive values.

Also Lakshimi and Paul (2018) also suggested ways by which value education can be infuse into Social Studies, they suggested that Social Studies teachers can use topics that are value based to inform, sensitize, provoke and stimulate value orientation in the life of learners. Topics such as hard work, corruption, contentment discipline, cooperation and many others can be adopted. The teacher should also do active discussions and have practical sessions that reflect on human actions and activities. Social Studies should also be used to develop the feeling of nationalism, create awareness about the environments, energy, population, health, pollution, food security and water supply; all these are attached to value system and beliefs. In addition, creating an atmosphere of gender equality, cultural integration and treating children from different cultures with equity can also be useful. Pupils/students should be taught to treat people equally irrespective of ethnical affiliation, socio-economic status and creed (Atubi, 2020b). Social Studies should also be used to teach the values of dignity in labour, self employment and responsibility. Finally, value education should be embedded into the Social Studies school curriculum by curriculum experts and the Nigerian education and research and development council (NERDC). The curriculum should centre on topics such as poverty, gender equality, patriotism, religion, environmental protection, social justice, human rights, culture and many more that will promote the education of values. The value education that will be taught in Social Studies should be more of practical approach and less theoretical in nature, while adopting a holistic approach in the impartation of values into learners.

**Conclusion**

Value education is an integral aspect of Social Studies education, it has a Nexus with major aspects of Social Studies curriculum and the society at large. Nigeria as a pluralistic state with diverse conflicting values and interest, therefore there is the need to develop values among pupils and students as well as in teacher training programmes across the country. Value based education should be provided through the home, informal and formal education sector. Social Studies is positively poised to fill this gap, because it has an importunate role to play in the Nigerian educational arena. The present day Social Studies curriculum needs to be more relevant to the demands of society through the teaching of values. Social Studies should be made to rise up to this occasion and provide the needed values and attitude that can make the citizens function effectively in a pluralistic society.

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