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## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SOCIAL STUDIES MORAL VALUES AND POTENTIALS OF ADDRESSING MORAL FAILURE IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*The decay in the Nigerian society has affected the standard of values and moral character formation. This has manifested in so many anti-social vices. The common anti-social behaviour exhibited in the Nigerian society include corruption, dishonesty, greed, violent crimes, kidnapping, indiscipline, examination malpractices, disrespect to constituted authorities, drug abuse, low moral courage among many others. All these have constituted a serious moral problem for the Nigerian state and have constrained all sincere efforts targeted at achieving national development. This paper provided a conceptual moral values framework that can be used to address the moral failure in the Nigerian system. The basic assumptions of values education in Social Studies that serve as a guiding principle such as; values are not passively received, but are actively built up by the cognitive learner. In other words, values are socially constructed over time, values are not a collection of isolated rules and facts. Instead, values are perceived as a network of ideas, where each idea is connected to several others. To be useful, moral values should be taught as a unified body of knowledge and Social*

*Studies as a unified discipline has the potentials to drive the common Nigerian moral values identified in the paper such as; detesting laziness, dignity of labour, respect for parent/elders, hospitability, public spiritedness, respect for authority, hard-work, and respect for sanctity of life. The paper recommended the re-engineering of values education in Nigeria schools through Social Studies as catalyst for national development. It is the view of the author that the pursuit of national development is first attitudinal and so the citizenry should be given new orientation that goes to ensure the overhauling and reconstruction of the total values system in the society for obvious national development to be guaranteed.*

**Keywords:** *Conceptual framework, Moral values, Moral failure, Social Studies, Values education*

## **Introduction**

Education is a continuous process that takes place throughout life in different forms, but in an all-exclusive manner. To address moral issues, education must be conceived in a more all-encompassing fashion. Based on this, the demand on schools and Social Studies in particular of the mandate on the formulation of acceptable moral values for the young ones to imbibe and live with is fast increasing. This is stem from the rapid decay of the overall values system among nations of the world.

While the school's primary mission is to promote academic achievement, there is nonetheless a real need for schools to promote character development as well. Studies have shown that when teachers and administrators' model core values and students learn skills to resolve conflict peacefully, practice pro-social behaviours, and engage in service to the community, societies will show lower incidence of violence (Virginia CEP, 2000). The objectives of Social Studies were planned in line with the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) to build sound character and promote moral values in the Nigerian child. For example, the Nigerian higher institutions included learning and character development as a requirement for

certification but failed to plan a special curriculum for achieving it. To others, it might be an oversight while to this paper, it is deliberate based on the fact that Social Studies must have addressed that important aspect of education.

Social Studies is a core curricular (primary and secondary) school subject design to educate the Nigerian child those core civic values and virtues which are efficacious to civilized society and are common to the diverse social, cultural, and religious groups of the country. This may be one of the issues that influenced Mezieobi (2013) definition of Social Studies as a subject that focused on the society and created to sharpen the creative potentials of the learner, in other to think creatively and contribute towards identifying and solving societal problems. Whereas, many believed that Social Studies content is derived from the immediate environment of the learners to instill in the students, the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions it considers important concerning the relationship human beings have with each other, their world and themselves. Moreover; “the purpose of the Social Studies programme is to instill in students civic virtues and personal character traits so as to improve the learning environment, reduce disciplinary problems, and develop civic-minded students of high character.

None the less, moral failures in the Nigerian society has been seen as a combination of actions, conduct or acts that constitute unwholesome socially unacceptable activities engaged by youths (Eche, 2016). Moral failures therefore, constitute any action carry out by individuals that is against societal norms and values. Researchers such as Mezieobi, Nwaubani, and Anyanwu, (2012) and Mohammed (2013) pointed out that moral failures manifest in violent demonstrations, looting, stealing and robbery attacks, intra and inter-tribal fighting, destruction and vandalization of public properties; rudeness; hyperactivity; ego centricity; vandalism; drug abuse; acts of violence and lawlessness; hostage taking; oil bunkering; arms insurgence; truancy; drug abuse; examination malpractice, cultism and more recently, the increase in banditry and kidnapping.

The above scenario is as a result of decay in core moral values. Sambo (2009) viewed the moral problems in schools and the society

as deteriorated and leadership role in moral training of schools appears to have disappeared. Parents to some extent contribute to the lack of moral values of their children which has resulted to the increasing moral failures in the country. This ugly trend can only be curbed through functional Social Studies curriculum because it serves as a tool for societal transformation, international connectivity and a vital instrument for social and economic mobility at all levels. This paper therefore provided a conceptual moral values framework that can be used to address the moral failure in the Nigerian system.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

**Moral Education/Values:** Etymologically, the word moral comes from a Latin word “*mos or moris*” meaning the code or customs of a people, the social glue that defined how individuals should live together. Moral education is not a new idea; it is as old as society and education. It addresses ethical dimensions of the individual and society and examines how standard of right and wrong are developed. According to King and Wester in New Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol. 9, ‘Moral education is a designed moral value that guides people and in learning them towards their eventual role in the society’. While New Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol. 8 defined moral education as the development of sense of moral sensitivity and duty towards people and state.

Fafunwa (1986) defined moral education as the inculcation of desirable values, norms, attitudes approved by the society in order to have good citizens in the future. In the light of the above definition, moral education is the key to the general sustenance of national integration and social orderliness. In addition, what is morally good is what brings dignity, respect, contentment, prosperity, joy and happiness to man and his community. While, what is morally bad is what brings misery, misfortune, misinformation and disgrace. Thus, moral education teaches core moral values, such as honesty and responsibility, care among others and helps to raise morally responsible and self-disciplined citizens. Problem solving, decision-making and conflict resolution are also important parts of developing

good moral character. Thus, to educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace in society.

The Basic assumptions of Values Education in Social Studies are: Values are not passively received, but are actively built up by the cognitive learner. In other words, values are socially constructed over time; Values are not a collection of isolated rules and facts. Instead, they can be perceived as a network of ideas, where each idea is connected to several others. To be useful, values should be taught as a unified body of knowledge; God has a major influence on people's lives and, thus, there are absolute values based on the teaching of religion, and relative values created by human minds; School is not neutral, but a value--loaded enterprise. Teachers need to play the role of moral educators, instructors, facilitators, and exemplars; and God creates human beings for specific purposes, and values education should stress an integrated view of man, in as much as human character involves the interplay of four basic elements: spirituality~ knowledge~ attitudes and values~ and action, (Ololobou, 2010).

Instead of following a specific aspect of psychology, sociology, anthropology, several approaches like cognitive developmental, values clarification, and character education are combined to form the epistemology of the Social Studies Moral Values syllabus. I consider it an integrated syllabus which complements the National Educational Philosophy of Nigeria.

**Values/ Values Clarification:** According to Shaver and Strong (2006), "Values are our standards and principles for judging worth. They are the criteria by which we judge 'things' (people, objects, ideas, actions and situations) to be good worthwhile, desirable~ or, on the other hand, bad, worthless, despicable" (p. 15). By the definition above, values can be subjective and are based on what a certain community understands and judges as good and bad, right and wrong. Certain characteristics of values clarification are of importance to Nigerian moral values, these values clarification approach are the skills of thinking on various levels, critical thinking (Raths, Wasserman, Jonas & Rothstein, 2007) and divergent or creative thinking. The very term "values clarification" has

contributed to some misunderstanding. The goal of values clarification is not to simply clarify or be clear about one's values whilst displaying a hedonistic lack of interest in anyone else's values. It is to be clear about one's own values and be concerned for the consequences of one's position - both personal and social.

The valuing process is a process by which we increase the likelihood that our living in general, or a decision in particular, makes sense~ first, have positive value for us, and, second, be constructive in the social context. The use of the valuing process does not guarantee a good decision for us or society~ it merely increases the likelihood (Kirschenbaum, 2012). Here is another "catch" in the values clarification approach which contradicts the Nigerian philosophy. Students of Social Studies are expected to develop into citizens who are responsible towards their family, society, and nation and acquire noble values accepted in the Nigerian society.

Raths, Harmin and Simon (2006) explicated the process in their book "Values and Teaching", in which they described seven sub-processes that lead toward value clarity: to be chosen from alternatives, to be chosen after thoughtful consideration of consequences, to be chosen freely, to be prized and cherished, to be publicly affirmed, "to be acted upon, and to be acted upon repeatedly and consistently". Raths encouraged his students to use these processes to develop their own values. The complications in Nigerian schools started when the process of values clarification was truncated, by allowing students to develop their own values rather than guiding students towards developing positive values through clarification. Studying values education must be seen in the context of several assumptions such as every student has a religion in which religious values are absolute, the rule of law through the Federal Constitution is to be strictly followed and the students are heavily influenced by cultural norms and traditions although students are free to develop their own values which are confined to the above factors.

Values clarification involves recognising the values that others hold and recognising one's own values. As a result of such activity, students might modify or confirm their own values. It is not about situational ethics or relativism~ and cultures as well as religion

need to be taken seriously (Buchanan, 2007). In Nigeria, though Social Studies teachers teach values clarification, cultural and religious factors are not given priority. The reality is that students are not the same and teachers have to respect that diversity. Complexities in Nigeria make such an approach not appropriate in the values education classroom. There are certain values judgement implicit in each process. If a Social Studies educator urge critical thinking, then he value rationality. If a Social Studies educator support moral reasoning, then he values justice. If a Social Studies educator advocate divergent thinking, then he values creativity. If a Social Studies educator uphold free choice, then he values autonomy or freedom and if a Social Studies educator encourage 'no- lose' conflict resolution, then he values equality" (Kirschenbaum, 2012:13). People who feel good about themselves tend to be more effective by almost any set of criteria.

**Social Studies:** This is recognized as one of the core-subjects at the Basic Education level which has the potentials of inculcating functional knowledge and desirable values and attitudes as well as relevant problem solving skills into Nigerian pupils. According to Ezeoba (2012), the ultimate aim of Social Studies is to equip individuals with knowledge and understanding for peaceful relationships and living. Similarly, Ezeoba argues that nations which used Social Studies as a corrective measure for reconstruction and rehabilitation of their societies place high value in the implementation of their Social Studies curriculum so that the subject exposes them to new values and skills necessary for the sustainability of a peaceful nation. The focus of teaching and learning moral values in Social Studies is based on several main principles assumed to deliver holistic individuals physically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and socially. The principles include: i. Being responsible towards self, family, and others; ii. Being caring towards the environment; iii. Sustaining peaceful and harmonious life; iv. Being patriotic; v. Respecting human rights and, vi. Practicing principles of democracy in life.

### **The Nigeria Core Public Moral Values**

It is quite imperative to understand the concept of moral values before identifying and establishing Nigeria core public moral values. Bodurin (2009) noted that moral values are basic beliefs and attitude in a society whether of individual or groups which are considered worthwhile and which serve as guide to choices and behaviour in daily life. Esu (2009) further defined moral values as ideals that guide or qualify your personal conduct, interaction with others, and involvement in your career. Values help one to, and inform one on how he or she can conduct one's life in a meaningful way. On his part, Bolarin (2009) after broad consideration of various definitions of moral values defined values to mean trait, practices, acts, ideals, beliefs, attitudes, and principles that a group or society considers to be of merit, worthwhile, dear, acceptable and right.

From the above, the core values of Nigeria that have been weakened over the years need to be strengthened for obvious national development to be achieved. NEEDS (2004) described Nigeria as a multi-ethnic society, with a value system that is derived from the diversity of its people, religion and culture. These core moral values NEEDS identified include respect for elders, honesty and accountability, co-operation, industry, discipline, self-confidence and moral courage.

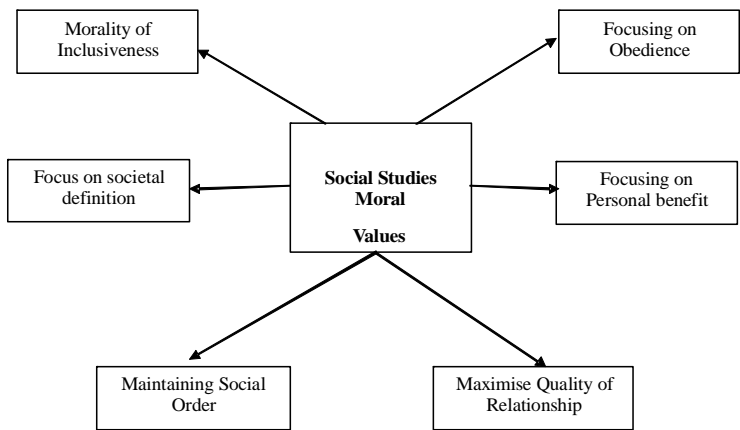
The above core values are grossly compromised in the present Nigeria socio-economic and political contexts to the extent it this has constituted a serious moral problem. Their excessive compromise has manifested in greed, corruption dishonesty, violent crimes, political killings, drug peddling, and so many other anti-social behaviours capable of jeopardizing all sincere efforts directed at stimulating national development. From this weak background, Dike (2005) calls for the strengthening of values education in schools as corruption drives and shapes social values in Nigeria, and for some individuals the quest for easy money is a justification for violating the laws of the land and distorting official policies directed toward national development. Given this circumstance, the imperative for values education cannot be over emphasized as values education involves educating for character and for good moral values. This implies the teaching of respect and responsible adult life to the



citizens. It is for good character and moral development which will lead to a healthy nation.

Basic fundamental moral values every responsible nation should teach its citizens include respect for constituted authority and sanctity of life, responsibility, values of honesty, fairness, tolerance, prudence, self-discipline, helpfulness, compassion, cooperation and courage, along- side some fundamental procedural values look upon as basic ingredients of democracy. They include the rule of law, equality of opportunity, due process, representative government, checks and balances and democratic decision-making. These are the underlying democratic values that guarantee democratic stability. Nonetheless, Bolarin (2015) went further to identify some dominant values which formed the core values upheld by a larger section of the Nigerian society to include the following: Detesting laziness, Dignity of labour, Respect for elders, Hospitability, Public spiritedness, Respect for authority, Hard-work, Respect for sanctity of life and Honesty and truthfulness

The above cherished values radically started getting eroded and to corroborate Aderinwale (2013), the paradigm has shifted and Nigerians have generally slipped away from those cherished core moral values and embraced a new culture, a new way of life, a new world view. The consequence is that those cherished values have been diluted by the prevailing societal vices.



**Figure 1: Model of Social Studies Moral Values**  
**Source: Egan (2018).**

Moral values in Social Studies is a lifelong process starting from the immediate family. At this stage, the learner is taught to obey elders in the home, in the society and yield to the wishes of those in higher authority. The judgement is based on showing of respects and avoidance of offenses or violation of rules and regulation. At this stage morality teaching is confined to the family, the place of worship and the society to which one was affiliated. While the reward for obedience is praises, the violation attract punishment. However, through the Social Studies plug-in approach, the learner can be taught moral values in all Social Studies curriculum content without a corresponding respond for reward or punishment.

Followed after is the individual desire to be reciprocated, what Gardiner (1999) called the instrumental morality. The individual seeks personal benefit as a result of being obedience to constituted authority with no or little concern for the needs of others. If well handled by the family, religious body or the school can lead to hard work and the desire to acquire knowledge.

The third, is the stage of building and maintaining relationship. The relationships which are initially confined to the individual, his or her society, and its institutions, are then expanded to include national and international levels. This is taught in Social Studies from the primary school as relationship in the society to the local government, and at the secondary school level as human relationship with the state and human relationship with the country, while at the tertiary level as human relationship with international community (Kazi, 2007). If well managed will help the learner to maximize relationship with peers and other people around him/her but on the contrary can lead to deviancy. While in school children tries to do that which will gain others' approval.

The next level is the shift from personal gain to mutual respect called the stage of maintaining social order. Through Social Studies, individuals are taught to place preference of moral values across levels, judgements about moral issues are at first based on an egocentric perspective of individual concerns, but after exposure to Social Studies content, the individual advance to a broader

perspective that encompasses concerns for equality, mutual respect, and protections of basic human rights.

A morality that focuses on social contract: What is moral is what people have previously agreed to. Morality is defined in terms of maintaining the social systems from which one benefits. Therefore, morality such as justice, maintaining law and order should be impacted into the learners in a more integrated and multi-disciplinary content which make Social Studies as the most appropriate subject at the formative stage of every human being. In this stage, morality is defined in terms of fulfilling the social obligations implicit in social contracts that are “freely agreed upon” and a “rational calculation of overall utility, ‘the greatest good for the greatest number.

### **Social Studies Moral Values Model to Address Moral Failures in the Society**

It could be affirmed that moral values provide ethical principles that safeguard the right of the individual in the society and points out to his reciprocal duties and responsibilities. In this way there is justice, freedom and social order from the contents of moral values education in Social Studies. As Wiredu (2012) observed, morality is universal and essential to every human culture. And any society without a modicum of morality must collapse. In this sense, moral values is the observance of rules for the harmonious adjustment of the interests of the individual to those of others in society. Considering morality as a social enterprise through which all human beings have some concern for their personal interests, yet it is clear that everyone is not naturally inclined towards being concerned about the interests of others all the time. According to Wiredu (2012) morality cannot but be founded upon the principle of sympathetic impartiality. Stressing that it takes imagination to foresee that life in any society in which everyone openly avowed the contrary of this principle, and acted accordingly would inevitably be solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and probably short. In other words, morality is a medium of regulating human interpersonal behaviour; morality is an emanation of man overriding desire to preserve social harmony by

ensuring that moral codes discourage aggression, injustice, deceit and anarchy in any social order.

Speaking from the social nature of human existence, morality becomes a very important and inevitable tool which could avert the condition of disharmony in society. Morality achieves this social regulation and control not only by ensuring the clarification of rules and laws differentiating good from bad, right from wrong in society, but also by ensuring that specific traits of characters or dispositions are instilled in people. Frankena (2013) affirmed that morality is an instrument of society as a whole for the guidance of individuals and groups. Suffices to observe that an individual, family or social class may have a morality that is different from that upheld by the society. But for him, the dominant morality in the society is the societal morality. This makes morality social in a more fundamental sense, as an outline of norms of behaviour operative in a community. To this end, life in a human community is possible, only if there exists a certain level of friendliness, mutual aid and rules for settling issues. Without these facilities, a community cannot survive or exist at all.

The fundamental goals of Social Studies are to provide fair and favourable conditions for the national integration, protection, peace and security of lives and property, the enjoyment of rights and fulfilment of duties by all, and the sharing of benefits and burdens in socially equitable ways. Social order strives for the good of all and the active participation of as many as possible in the administration of social life. It seeks to co-ordinate the voluntary initiatives and gifts of individuals and groups in their attempt to make some contributions to the society. The society can benefit from the inputs of people only if it administers social life on the basis of justice seeking the best and harmonious system of allocating and protecting rights, duties, responsibilities, burdens and benefits in the society in accordance with hang concern, cordial and mutually supportive practices and intentions.

Morality conform itself to the basic goal of Social Studies, which is the articulation of a properly regulated system of interrelated social activities in view of the common good and dignity of man. Social order and morality strive to uphold the dignity and respect of man by relating to him a responsible, free, voluntary and rational

agent. Thus, morality and Social Studies strive to guarantee harmonious, peaceful coexistence among men through the assurance of co-operation, goodwill and role designation as critical factors in any worthwhile human social interaction.

In Nigeria for example, inculcation of moral values and social order will disseminate favourable traits and dispositions among citizens in turn would guarantee the continued security, peace, co-operation and friendliness indispensable for our national integration. Moral education impacts on the functioning of other areas of social life such as politics, economy so that they are properly regulated using human, dignifying and productive rules or patterns of action. Therefore, morality emerges as the function of social order, without its viable social order and national integration cannot possibly be established and sustained. The moral values underlying national integration and social order are thereby made explicit, normative and universal for all in the society. However, mass society presents a sharp contrast, as the young grow up, they are faced with confusions, delays and discontinuities. This has become a great challenge in integration and securitization of citizens.

The society have also witnessed the failures of militarism and militarization that triggered the conversion of youths into arsonists, bandits, renegades, hooligans, terrorists, hijackers, vandals, armed robbers, cultists, human traffickers, drug traffickers, prostitutes, fraudsters and assassins, among others. There is need to look elsewhere for the foundations of the national integration and insecurity challenges that is urgently and desperately needed in Nigeria today. Moral education seems to be a way forward especially when we define and contextualize its role in the much needed establishment and sustenance of national integration in Nigeria.

Nationally examination malpractice has consequences on the candidates, parent, educational system and the quality and efficiency of work input of workers in both private and Government establishments for instance, first and foremost, candidates caught committing examination malpractice stand the risk of being barred from writing future examination without being caught, will have the tendencies to continue with fraudulent act from one level of education to another and even after graduation.

Omooba (2008) asserted that these acts have resorted in cases of embezzlement of both private and public funds. Someone who cheat in examination without being caught from primary school through secondary school to the university are among those notorious cult members who terrorize other students and create confusion in university campuses when they are not able to cheat further. Furthermore, the consequences of examination malpractice also go further to the quality and inefficiency of work in both private and establishment the pity of, it is that this mediocre that has nothing to offer are employed to man sensitive position in our society that build a fraud would only enthrone ignorance and reward mediocrity (Nwaeze, 2007). On the international scene, the evil effect of examination malpractice is further evident in the embarrassment and rejection suffered overseas by holder of Nigeria educational and professional certificate is especially, within the last decade. This adverse consequence of examination malpractice underscores the urgency to eradicate it in our society. Through modeling, reinforcement of desirable behaviours, teacher personality the model can be applied to the vices.

## **Conclusion**

Looking at the socio-economic and political landscape of Nigeria, and in consideration of the prevailing societal order, this paper attempted to establish the relevance of a conceptual moral values education as catalyst for addressing moral failures in the Nigerian system. The challenge of attaining national development is seen to be attitudinal in character and in form. This paper identified Nigeria as one blessed entity full of excellent potentials both material and human but with a weak values system, the leadership has failed in harnessing the resources to stimulate national development and uphold a national moral system. This could be a result of inadequacy of core moral values model for transmitting values such as respect for elders and constituted authorities, honesty, accountability, cooperation, industry alongside discipline, self-confidence and moral courage have gone a long way to fertilize social vices such as corruption, greed, dishonesty, mediocrity, intolerance, and many others.

### **The Way Forward**

Social Studies Educators should make conscious efforts aimed at strengthening of national moral values as a possible paradigm for behaviour transformation and ethical reorientation. It is also the author's view that a national policy on moral values education be put in place as a reference instrument that will guide both individual and official transactions in the country. When all these are sustained, the possibility of addressing moral failures in the nation is assured. Social Studies curriculum for senior secondary school should be implemented to bridge the gap and cover for the disjuncture in the students' character development.

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