
REPOSITIONING NATIONAL VALUE EDUCATION SYSTEM
AS AN INSTRUMENT PER EXCELLENCE IN CURBING THE
UPSURGE IN YOUTH RESTIVENESS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Against wide expectations that our educational system as practised over the years would have ushered in a new lease of life to the suffering masses of Nigeria, we have rather been witnessing a type of retrogression in social well-being of the people. There has been a persistent dislocation in the structures that protect the values of the society. That is why the nation in the past and even now is witnessing myriads of restiveness among the youths of this great nation. This development has become so pervasive in nature that the hope of a united Nigeria appears to be growing slimmer day-by-day. The current spate of terrorist acts in the North East, banditry in the North Central and North West, kidnapping in the South-East, West, South-South and of recent Northern regions, ritual killings, armed robbery, raping of both adult and minors among other criminal behaviours in our society today, all point to the fact that the society to a reasonable extent has lost her original sense of value, sense of dignity in human relationship and disrespect to sanctity of human life. This paper examined the issues surrounding youth restiveness in the country using analytical approach. The paper

reviewed the roles and relevance of social studies and functional value education option as intervention mechanism in addressing this nagging issue of youth restiveness. It was observed that the present curriculum of Social Studies as reviewed in 2014 still has some missing links and gaps that have to be filled in the present circumstance. The omission of SS1-3 in the Social Studies curriculum in that review needed to be revisited considering the relevance of this subject at this youthful age. The paper, therefore, suggested for the expansion of the present curriculum content to accommodate all the cardinal objectives of value education. The curriculum should be planned in a manner that will close the existing gap and capturing the interests of these young elements in the senior secondary schools. In this way, inimical issues that are confronting the nation like terrorism, armed robbery, hostage taking, insurgency, suicide bombing and the like could be contained in the long run.

Keywords: Youth restiveness, Value education, Social Studies, curriculum Review

Introduction

The increasing upsurge in youth violence in Nigeria today is a development that is threatening the very foundation of Nigeria as a nation. There has been on daily increase in the occurrence of acts of violence and lawlessness across the country ranging from kidnapping, pipeline vandalism, arms insurgence, cultism, terrorism, banditry, ethnic cleaning, raping of adults and minors, genocide, and a host of other youth associated crimes.

In the past, youths were perceived as heroes of the nationalistic movement. As students, they constituted a strong militant wing of the anti-colonial struggle. As founders of the Nigerian youths movement, the West African Students' Union (WASU) the Zikists Movement etc. They popularized the anti-imperialist consciousness theorized by the elder nationalists (Onoge, 2004,). As workers in the coal mines of Iva Valley Enugu, some of them were murdered by

colonial police, yet they persisted. On the eve of Nigeria independence, Nigerian students from University of Ibadan and Yaba Polytechnic demonstrated fidelity to the legacy of militant anti-colonialism by physically disrupting parliamentary sessions in Lagos to block ratification of an Anglo-Nigerian Defense pact secretly imposed by the British government as a conditionality for conceding independence. The public read the behavior as patriotic and the judge who tried their leaders reflected this public mood and dismissed the demonstration as an instance of harmless youthful exuberance. In the context of Nigeria's historical experiences, youths and students have rendered valuable contributions to the struggle for liberations and national development.

Unfortunately, their positive contributions in Nigeria tended to be drowned by rather frequent and sometimes violent protest actions, kidnappings, bombings and other numerous deviant behaviours. The image of Nigeria's youth by the public recently is largely negative. No week passes without media report of wanton destruction of lives and property by ravaging youths across the country. The argument here is that aggression and violence that are common among the youths are results of some gaps either in our value education system or gaps in their felt needs that are not filled overtime.

We know that value education inculcates in students the understanding of moral values and disposes them to good behavior and attitude. As crime rate increases, also literacy rate is expected to increase more. Value education imposes on every child the good virtue of patience, honesty, tolerance, respect for human life and other positive attitudes. However, all these virtues appear to be lacking among our teeming youths who now engage in all sorts of crimes against the society. The pertinent question is at what point did we get it wrong in our educational system that made these virtues absent in the life of our young ones? Is the problem with the Barber, the clipper or the head itself? These form the focus of this paper.

Issue of Youth Restiveness

Restiveness means refusal to be controlled – especially the adolescents. Enueme and Onyeme (2010) put it that Nigerian youths

have for some years developed into what could be regarded as social loafing, non-conformity behavior, illusion of self and vulnerability. Young people all over the world are a vital and important segment of the society in which they live. A disciplined, focused and law abiding youth can create a bright future for any nation. Conversely, a lawless, indulgent and violent youth is a great threat to a nation's peace and security.

Akanmidu (2004) was of the view that to be restive is to be unable to stay still, or unwilling to be controlled especially because one is bored or not satisfied with certain decisions, charges and non-existing laws considered to be unfavourable. As the name implies, it is a combination of any action or conduct that constitutes unwholesome socially unacceptable and activities engaged in by youths in any setting. Historically, youth restiveness has become a transitional device used by Nigerian young adults to get what they want from the relevant authority. Original credence to youth resistance to operating conditions, issues and unwelcome leadership regimes dated back to 1934, when Herbert Macaulay floated a political party to kick against colonial political dependency with fellow elite youths who had contact with the West. Other political parties like the NCNC 1945, NPC 1949 and AG 1951 had youth wings as vibrant as their mother parties. Therefore, as students began to unionize, campus cult and organized gang actions, emerged. Ethnic cliques and cleavages as well as clannish orientation among students seem to have legitimized restive reaction among youths.

Outside the campus are proliferated youths who initiated ethnic militias such as the Odudua People's Congress (OPC), Yoruba World Council (YWC) agitating for Odudua Republic in South West, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), all in the South-East, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) both in the Niger Delta, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) and of recent the Middle Belt Youth Council, and finally the deadly Boko Haram terrorists in the North Eastern part of Nigeria etc. are but some of the notable organized youthful gang up expressing individual and collective felt needs in Nigeria today. Some of the

groups have metamorphosed into other sects who have taken to other actions that are not intandem with the initial group interests. The high rate of kidnapping, bombings, banditry and ethnic cleansing, ritual killings, armed robbery, are typical examples. There is also a rise in organized youth delinquencies in Nigeriacities today, popularly known as 'area boys' and of recent one million boys, mostly in Lagos. They have a non-gang structure inspecific city turfs where they operate and defend against rival groups.

A number of studies have identified factors responsible for youth restiveness in Nigeria. From the empirical survey of children and youth in organized armed violence, Ibrahim (2006) reported that the disenchantment and frustration of young people, much due to mass poverty and unemployment have further increased due to the number of aggrieved youth and resulted in the emergence of "area boys" and Almajiris who target the very society that alienated them. The report showed the age characteristics of some of these armed youths in Nigeria who are aged between 16-23 years and over 60% of them are unemployed.

Maciver (2019) observed the high rate of youth restiveness in their study which is attributable to economic stagnation, fear and suspicion, political instability, poverty and bad governance, unemployment, corruption etc. Restiveness to them means refusal to be controlled especially the adolescents in our society. Such behaviours in most cases lead to breakdown of law and order, disruption of activities of production, ethnic liabilities and destruction of public and government properties. In other words, youth restiveness is a sustained protest to enforce desired outcomes from constituted authority characterized by violence and disruption of lawful activities (Elegbeleye, 2005).

Deprived of employment opportunity and livelihood, youths are mobilized by politicians and armed groups alike. Youth unemployment also has security implications for every country in Africa, since desperation often leads young people to fall prey to warlords, criminal gangs or illegal migration syndicates (Eteng, 1996). Closely related to the preceding positions is the failure of the state over the years to pursue genuine development of the society. Efforts to achieve development must transcend the limit of economic

growth to embrace such features of social justice as equality of opportunity, full employment, generally available social services, equitable distribution of income and basic political freedom. The massive corruption of state officials, the misery associated with adjustment and the anomic state of social services with its attendant consequences have robbed the country of its God-like character, thus provoking varied reactions (Friedman, 1996).

Today the consequences of youth restiveness stare us in the face. The truth is that youth restiveness and social vices are devastating both to the individual and the society at large. The government in the past embarked on some programmes such as the amnesty programme as palliative measures but none of them achieved the desired results. The violence continued to change shape, design, and high intensity at the level of destruction and damage to the society. The failure of these measures point to the fact that something very fundamental still has to be done to fill this gap in felt needs of the general masses. Our educational system needs to be repositioned to the level where societal values have to be reappraised and re-aligned in a way to take us back to our original beginning. Our curriculum of study at the primary, secondary and tertiary school levels need to be re-structured in a way that will stand all structures that will be needed to protect societal values, respect for human dignity and sanctity of human life. Functional value education through civic education and reformed social studies curriculum become very imperative.

Value Education as an Intervention Mechanism

Education is very important in the life of every individual. Education is the process of facilitating learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills values, beliefs and habits. Only by this process can one develop an individual with workable philosophy of value. On the other hand, Taylor and Taylor (2000) espoused value as the principle and fundamental convictions which act as general guides to behavior, the standards by which particular actions are judged as good or desirable. Such values reflect one's sense of right and wrong or what ought to be. When one thinks of values, the person might be thinking

of what is important to him/her and the society. Values tend to influence attitude and behaviours.

In this regard, therefore, value education can be defined as the education process that instills moral standards to create more civil and democratic societies. As an educational process, it is designed to promote tolerance and understanding above and beyond our political, cultural and religious differences. Value education is designed to teach those virtues like patience, honesty, respect for elders and the sanctity of human life and how to be a good citizen of any given society. The purpose primarily is to develop human personality.

Specially, value education aims at: the full development of child's personality in its physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects; development of good manners and responsibility towards citizenship; the way of thinking and living in an acceptable manner; developing patience, honesty, moral values, and responsible behaviours; inculcation of good manners and responsibilities and cooperative citizenship; developing democratic way of thinking and living; developing tolerance towards understanding of different religious faith; developing a sense of human brotherhood at social, national and international levels; and helping children to have faith in themselves and in some supernatural powers and order that are suppose to control this universe and human life.

Need for value Education

The level of moral decadence in our society has reached a point where all hands should be on desk to arrest the situation to save our society. The level of moral degeneration has metamorphosed into various social vices starring us in the face such as: lack of respect for the sanctity of human life; breakdown of parental control of children in families; lack of respect for authority, the brazen breaking of the law and total disregard for rules and regulations; crime and corruption; abuse of alcohol and drugs; abuse of women, children, and other vulnerable members of society; rape of adults and minors; and lack of respect for older people and property. etc.

In the face of all these problems and challenges, the peaceful coexistence in our society today, how do we reposition our

educational system to stem these negative forces that have engulfed the youths in our society? We know that these youths are tomorrow's leaders. If we give good education to these present day children, the future of the next generation will be well. However, educating children to take personal responsibilities and become good citizens of a society are both parental and societal responsibilities. The school system ought to teach these democratic values and so the school curricular should be supportive of the parental teaching of character and moral decision making.

Social Studies as a subject has been firmly entrenched in the curricular of Nigeria schools and colleges. The curriculum is designed to serve the interest of students at the junior secondary, colleges of education and university levels. Dubey (1980) identified the following as the main objectives of social studies as a subject of societal importance. The development of good citizenship, the upliftment of moral character and the promotion of social understanding in the societies; the promotion of national unity and economic development; preparing students for the world of work and understanding of everyday problems that they may face as adults; the development of critical thinking in problem solving and decision making for the survival and progress of the nation; enhancing socialization and acculturation of citizens in the society; in general, Social Studies aspires to achieve humanistic citizenships and value education.

In other words, Social Studies makes effort to inculcate a level of consciousness in the citizenry at all levels of the society which helps them to acquire the virtues of self-regulation, a discovery of the meaning of duty and accept responsibility, pursue honest endeavors through dedication to hard work. Since there is harmonious belief of what social studies stand for all over the world, its teaching and learning should occupy an important place in the social advancement of any society. Ndu (2020) opined that social studies will help us to achieve our goal of building a united, viable and prosperous Nigeria since the subject seeks to achieve national unity and national survival. Furthermore, in social studies, we learn about the cultural aspects of our society and that of other groups. When Nigeria youths understand and appreciate their

differences, develop genuine co-operation and a high sense of commitment to nation building, they will be able to promote the unity of the country.

In a situation whereby Nigeria is plagued with social problems and restiveness among the teeming youth of the country, inculcating the corrective values through a repositioned value education system will be a better option for the society. Social Studies in Nigeria context was prepared to take care of Nigeria's social issues, national values and moral curriculum. Unfortunately enough, secondary school is the level where these youths are at the peak of their youthful age with the attendant juvenile delinquencies, youthful exuberance and venture-someness. Social Studies at this stage should be packaged in a manner that gives the learner a free hand and opportunities to make enquiries, investigate, discover and acquire experiences in order to make decisions on social issues and become responsible citizens. At this level when the social propeller is pushing the youths into the society, there appears to be a void in our educational system as a result of which social studies cum value education have jointly failed to take a position that will effectively address the yawning gap. As a result of this gap, these youths have been allowed to model the society in any way they understand and wish to operate.

However, the issue of concern to all is the readiness of government and individuals especially our youth in accepting social studies as a veritable tool for personal, national growth as well as development. There is this problem of poor perception of what social studies is out to accomplish. This is so because the positive values and skills which the subject has as cardinal objectives run into conflict path with the existing negative social, economic and political environment. Social studies as a discipline has a central role to play in Nigeria particularly where the old norms are fast losing their impacts on the peoples way of life and fast being replaced with learned behavior. The subject has direct impact on the cultural upbringing of the citizenry as it touches all spheres of human behaviour. It becomes very imperative that the curriculum experts should look into the current content of this subject to incorporate and place serious emphasis on the cardinal principles of value education such as:- The need to make education more relevant to

the needs of the individual and society; The need to use education for national integration, social and economic development; The need to develop the right societal values; and the need to make an individual responsive to the society in which he lives.

Since Social Studies, as an eclectic discipline draws parts of its contents from value and character education, it is, therefore, the type of learning that aims at creating a free society of responsible and responsive citizens by imbuing them with desirable attitudes and values as well as appropriate mental, physical skills and abilities for meaningful living and interaction (Ololobou, 1996). He opined that a typical social studies programme must encompass four cardinal objectives: the environment, the various skills, values and attitudes and emerging issues. As a corrective study, it proffers plausible solutions to the declining values which apparently is the bane of Nigerians' socio-economic and political environment. With the help of social studies and value education, values can be acquired and maintained, re-ordered and promoted for the good of all.

A proper integration of these two disciplines will go a long way in ensuring that youth are able to understand and apply values such as care and compassion, patriotism, right attitude to work, doing one's best, fair-play, freedom, honesty and trustworthiness, integrity, respect, responsibility and understanding, tolerance and inclusion; Value-education as an explicit goal of schooling that will promote democratic way of life and values in diversity; and articulate the values of the society through hard work, perseverance, love, oneness, sharing and apply these consistently in their daily life.

There is a widespread acknowledgment of the fact that for social studies to achieve these desired objectives, it presently needs a comprehensive review of the curriculum. We know that social studies have been reviewed so many times to meet the needs of the citizens. This review will surely continue in order to meet up with the fast changing face of Nigerian society. A comparison of the junior secondary school curriculum contents 2008 – 2013 and 2014 to date shows a state of imbalance in themes and topics offered to junior secondary school students. It was clear from the review that the contents were pruned down to about half of the former content (Jekayinfa, 2018). Whatever this arrangement was designed for by

the curriculum planners in the review, the issues on ground point to the fact that the objective of this subject in providing citizens with the right attitude to life has been jeopardized.

Apart from pruning down, there is also the contentious of not including SS1- SS3 in the social studies curriculum contents. This obvious omission has robbed the subject the objective of attaining full development of societal values among our teeming youth. The curriculum content should be expanded here to incorporate all the cardinal objectives of the value education at this level. Previously when most schools were under the missionary, the system never played with moral lessons for youths. The moral tune then was very high. Respect and responsible youthful behavior, sanctity of human life were all sacredly observed. The current planners should borrow from the teaching methods of the past and see if we can still catch them young. Value education packaged through social studies will help to achieve the goal of building a united, viable and prosperous nation where respect for the values of the society will be upheld. If we, therefore, encourage the teaching of the subject at all levels of education, our children and especially the youth would be taught the virtues of love, care, respect and sacrifice for one's country. They will also be taught about our cultural heritage, customs, traditions, courage, kindness, patriotism, self-discipline, appreciation, perseverance, open mindedness, endurance, resourcefulness, obedience, sympathy and industry. These social attributes are important for the upbringing of these young ones as our future leaders.

Conclusion

Nigeria as a nation is witnessing various degrees of socio-political and economic crises ranging from economic recession, joblessness, terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, rape and various forms of unrest among the youths. An exemplary citizen is made not born. Just as we learn mathematics and languages, we should also become specialists in those lessons that are fundamental to living in harmony and social progress such as respect, empathy, equality, solidarity and critical thinking. Without these and other ethical principles, that define us as human beings, it will be difficult for us to build a

better world. A well packaged value education system for the youths at all the levels of education becomes instrument per excellence in controlling the excesses of our present day youths. Curriculum of social studies that contained value and moral education needs to be packaged for the Senior Secondary Schools to reduce the moral decadence among our growing youths in Nigeria.

Way forward

Following the events that took place in Nigeria in recent time, it has become very clear that the youths have risen up to long decades of frustration and denials of the basic necessities of life. Some expressed these feelings through peaceful protest, others took to violence and wanton destruction of government and individual properties. Based on the observation of this study, the following recommendations are put forward as a way out:

Our curriculum experts without further delay should design measures that will ensure or guarantee the philosophical and historical sustainability of value education through social studies in a way that will return the spirit and letters of the Nigerian Social Studies project.

The curriculum shng the interest of the young elements in the senior secondary schools. In this way, inimical issues that are confronting this nation like terrorism, armed robbery, hostage taking, suicide bombing pipeline vandalism, insurgency and the likes could be contained in the long run.

For youth to acquire values that are tenable for their growth and development which will in turn promote peace and stability in Nigeria, their basic needs must be provided.

Parents, teachers and stakeholders must improve on the teaching of values to young ones through pronouncements, rules and warnings, consistent modeling of values whether consciously or unconsciously, through stories with moral lessons etc.

There should also be a value-base education that targets the youth at the senior secondary school level. This type of education will instill in youths educational and cultural values that aims at achieving multi-faceted development of a humanbeing. The values elements to be incorporated in the value education based curriculum

should include cooperation, responsibility, happiness, peace, respect, love, tolerance, humility and freedom.

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