

CULTURE FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION: SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION PERCEPTION

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Abstract

An addition of Social Studies in the curricula of Nigeria system of education was included with the hope to rescue, revive, restore and cure some of the ineffective and abnormalities of the previous system of education because of the ethnic groups with diverse cultures. Such cultures could be seen in the aspects of religion, language, dressing, dancing, level tolerance, respect for people, the type of food they consume, their ways of marriage, their housing style, occupation and the type of farming tools they use and so on. Social Studies, haven't been introduced in the curricula of Nigeria schools, there is yet to be total embracement/acceptance of the different cultures by her citizens even after been taught in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. The paper intends to capture ways in which Social Studies/Social Studies Education can be use to inculcate cultural values and it's diversities in schools through Social Studies teachers so as to make the individual become proactive and productive by having a global knowledge on the importance of culture in every society and to also promote culture for national integration Social Studies perception.

Keywords: Social Studies, Social Studies Education, Culture, Culture Diversity and National Integration

The inclusion of Social Studies in the curricula of Nigeria system of education was done with the hope of correcting abnormalities of the previous system of education. Ediyang, Ubi, Opoh and Iwok, (2015) described the introduction of Social Studies as similar to the coming of "a social messiah" who would salvage Nigeria from its many ills. This further explains that Social Studies was originally introduced to address contemporary issues especially in terms of reviewing the culture of Nigerians for the purpose of national integration by re-molding the citizens' minds and also creating the consciousness for responsible citizenship to promote the culture of the society for national integration be it within or abroad.

Conceptual Clarification

Social Studies

Social Studies as a school subject has no single universally accepted definition since its inception in 1916 in the United States of America. This is due to many reasons, some of which include that the:

- i. needs, aspirations and problems of one society are different from those of others;
- ii. subject matter of Social Studies does not seem at present to be enjoying the same uniformity of objectives all over the world because most of the authorities in Social Studies had their education background in other social science subjects;
- iii. dynamic nature of man and his/her culture; and
- iv. dynamic nature of society.

Based on these considerations, Social Studies have been defined as follows:

The Nigeria Educational Research Council (1980) defined Social Studies as a way of life, a way of seeing, viewing, conceptualizing and appreciating things and issues with special regard to their proper place and function in the ordering and management of man's natural, social and technological environments. Enem, (2007) defined Social Studies as a discipline through which man studies and learns about the problems of interaction and adjustment to the changing world.

Ukadike (2013) aptly described Social Studies as "a corrective study". For Ogundare, (2010), it is those common learning of man's interaction with his social and physical environment. It is not only a study but a way of life of how man influences and is influenced by his physical, political, economic, psychological and cultural environments. Akinola, (2011) viewed Social Studies as a problem oriented and an issue based discipline. Social Studies therefore is a tool for the acquisition of values, attitudes, skills and knowledge which help human beings to be useful to themselves and the society at large. They will be able to identify problems inherent in their environments and not only proffering solutions but more importantly tackling those problems which will eventually lead to their self fulfillment, self actualization and progress of the society. Social Studies is the study of human beings and the outcome of their relationships and interactions with environments. In any definition of Social Studies, human being is the main focus. He is the centre of the definition. If human being is removed from the definition of Social Studies, what is left is nothing short of vacuum. We look at the environment to understand "human being" and why he/she believes the way he/she does.

In view of Akinola, (2011), Ogundare, (2010), and Enem, (2007). Social Studies is culture-based with man as the core subject to pilot the day to day activities as they pose challenges within man's environment and how people utilize opportunities that come their way (be it positive or negative), by influencing the environment and the environment also influencing man/woman in return for the societal growth and development for a better society today and best among societies in the future. This further explains that no nation has reached her peak without drawing her source of success from value dispositions or character attached to the culture. Here, the importance attached to one's culture as a nation, has a long way to go in the history of life in any society. Ediyang and Effiom (2014) described the term Social Studies as the study of humanity, interaction of humans for peaceful coexistence, interdependence and interrelationships for effective living in the society.

In the context of this paper, from the researcher's view is that, Social Studies is a problem-oriented subject. With this, Social Studies is seen as a tool for discipline, that is flexible and rational in nature for the actualization of societal values, attitudes, skills and necessary knowledge. It also helps to confront life's challenges as they occur from time to time. Social Studies helps human beings to meet their immediate needs and by extension, it is useful for promoting national integration and development by positively contributing to the world at large. This simply means that if man is taken out of existence, there will be nothing left rather than empty surroundings. The surroundings of man will be livelier and worth living if the various cultures are respected and harmoniously shared in love and unity and there will be uninterrupted and speedy development.

Culture

Nigeria as a country is naturally distinguished and united by differences and similarities. These differences and similarities include , gender, age, language, ethnicity, religion, political ideology, educational qualification, geographical boundary, physical ability, level of income, social status as well as culture (Aisagbonhi, 2009; Erbas, 2013). However, most world economic centres,

following their commercial importance are mostly home to peoples of diverse cultures. Ironically, the Nigerian state, regarded from a distance as more culturally homogenous, has the biggest share of cultural diversity. The root of the cultural diversity in Nigeria is a coercive birth by colonial enterprise which resulted in mergers and in some cases creation of multiple, culturally incongruent and artificial boundaries through amalgamation of 1914 (Nnoli, 2008; Folarin, Olanrewaju & Ajayi, 2014).

According to Parekh (2005) culture is a historically inherited system of meaning and significance in terms of which a group of people understand and structure their individual and collective lives. It encompasses the body of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values of any given society and represents the invisible that surrounds us and prescribes much of our identity, what we value, and our response to life experiences (Inglis, 2008; Jenlink, 2009). Similarly, cultural diversity entails the harmonious co-existence and interaction of different cultures. It seems to be an inescapable fact to modern life as well as social work practice in Nigeria (Parekh, 2005). It is the foundation of our collective strength in our local communities and in our global society (International Federation of Library and Association Institute, 2012).

However, cultural diversity in Nigeria has become almost synonymous with the nation's social, economic, and political problems in recent years (Green, 2011). Nigeria is the most populated nation in Africa and has the highest number of mixed peoples. According to National Population Commission (NPC) (2006) the estimated population of Nigeria is 140 million people who are divided into over 250 ethnic clusters with each entity having its own norms, values, beliefs and even languages. This is likely to influence the ways of living and relationship with people as goals and aspirations in life are often a product of culturally held values.

Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behavior and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behavior (Spencer-Oatey 2008). This assumption (that culture is uniformly distributed) is unwarranted for two reasons, one is sociogenic (having to do with social groups and institutions) and the other, psychogenic (having to do with cognitive and effective processes characteristic of individuals).

Nigeria is a heterogeneous society with ethnic pluralism that is rooted in diverse cultures. Ekanola (2006) asserted that the creation of Nigeria as a single territorial and institutional framework expanded inter-ethnic interactions through the practice of colonial the system. Nigeria as a nation is characterized by many different languages such as Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Gbagi, Tiv, Idoma, Nupe, Egbira, Kanuri, Fulfude, Edo, Ijaw, Efik, Ibibio and so on, which are used as yardstick for determining the variability and diversity of its culture (Amali & Jekayinfa, 2013). Each of these ethnic groups in Nigeria is self perpetuating biological group, with identifiable interactive membership, value system, normative behaviour, peculiar in language, and a particular part of the state territory (Tiamiyu, 1999).

National Integration

National integration, otherwise termed nation-building, national unity, national cohesion, national loyalty, or the national question "involves consensus on the limits of the political community and on the nature of the political regime" (Liddle, 1970 cited in Otite, 2000). This simply means the forging of agreement among the members of a state on the extent of unity they wish to have as well as the type of political structure and institutions they desire. It is also a "process of unifying a society

which tends to make it a harmonious city, based on an order its members regard as equitably harmonious” (Duverger, 1976). This implies that integration promotes unity which encourages smooth interaction among the members of the given society based on certain established principles of fairness.

Jacob and Tenue (1964) define national integration as “a relationship of community among people within the same political entity a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive, to act together, to be committed to mutual programmes.” They are thus referring to a society of oneness whose members are willing to live and work together harmoniously and share the same destiny. It has also been viewed as: a process by which members of a social system develop linkages so that the boundaries of the system persists (sic) over time and the boundaries of sub-systems become less consequential in affecting behavior.

In this process, members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community (Morrison et al, 1972 cited in Ojo, 2005). This relates to a situation where territorial divisions within a polity gradually yield ground to cordial interactions of its members owing to the integrative mechanisms established. Similarly, Coleman and Rosberg (1964) view national integration as the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogeneous political community.

In other words, this is the increasing promotion or emergence of peace through the breaking down of cultural and regional divides in the process of evolving a united state. It has been argued that a society is integrated when “

- a. it has effective control over the use of the means of violence;
- b. it has a centre of decision making capable of effecting the allocation of resources and rewards; and
- c. it is a dominant focus of political identification for a large majority of politically aware citizens” (Etzioni, 1965 cited in Ojo, 2005).

It would seem here that Etzioni also has a ‘strong’ state in mind, and does not appear to have consideration for peaceful pursuit of integration. Do the citizens thought of by Etzioni identify with the political system peacefully or forcibly? Thus, Karl Deutsch et al (1966) seem to have considered these issues when they defined integration as “the attainment, within a territory of a ‘sense of community’ and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a long time, dependable expectations of peaceful community.”

It is asserted that “integration is built on the fact of diversity, the need for mutual accommodation and the desire of the parties in the system to maintain the integrity of the competing groups” (Eisinger, 1976 cited in Ojo, 2009). Also, Ogunjenite (1987) believes that national integration relates to the building of nation-states out of disparate socio-economic, religious, ethnic and geographical elements. According to him, this entails the translation of diffuse and unorganized sentiments of nationalism into the spirit of citizenship through the creation of state institutions that can translate into policy and programmes in line with the aspirations of the citizenry. Stated in another way, national integration means efforts to weld together a plural society to enhance development but without necessarily jeopardizing ethnic identity (Ogunjenite, 1987 cited in Ojo, 2009).

Bringing to a conclusion, the concept of national integration is a situation where the members of a state see themselves as one, treat one another fairly and work together cooperatively and freely and resolve their differences peacefully in the overall interest of the nation even in the face of cultural

diversities. In this way, unity, fair treatment, cooperation, consensus, and peaceful conflict-resolution become essential components of loyalty to the nation. Citizenship is our next term of focus.

Objective of Social Studies

Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) as reported by Bozimo and Ikwumlu (2009), the objectives of social studies are as follows:

- i. To help the learners fit into the society which he or she belongs.
- ii. To create an understanding of the environment, its man-made natural and spiritual resources and the conservation of these resources for development
- iii. To develop an awareness and appreciation of the interrelatedness of human knowledge and human life
- iv. To develop capacity to learn and acquire skills essential for the formulation of satisfactory professional life and further studies.

Social Studies in indigenous Nigerian societies placed emphasis on values or affective learning. Mezieobi, et al. (2008) citing (Mezieobi, 1992) stated that the affective learning focused on: (among others).

- Appropriate ways to greet elders and during occasions;
- Respect to elders, constituted authority and obedience to them;
- Respect to one's seniors and mutual respect;
- Loyalty to the family and the community;
- Hospitality to people;
- Learning the myths and traditions of the people and appreciating the values therein; Avoidance of taboos;

In essence, Social Studies provides a way of looking at society in order to understand its structure and its problems and to look for ways of solving those problems. It can therefore be claimed that the concern of Social Studies is to provide students with knowledge of the history, geography, social and political institutions and perhaps the psychological intricacies of daily existence in Nigeria. With the above facts in mind, it is little wonder that Social Studies cuts across such disciplines as Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, Economics, Psychology, History and Geography. From the explanation above, Social Studies extract some basic concepts that enable students to understand their fellow citizens holistically. Social Studies therefore seeks to integrate knowledge from the various traditional disciplines mentioned earlier.

The Role of Social Studies Education in Promoting Cultural Integration

The concept of education has been defined as all efforts, conscious and direct, incidental and indirect, made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered desirable in terms of the individual's own needs as well as the needs of the society where that education is based (Otiye, 2006). At the outset, it is important to point out that education goes beyond schooling. But schooling at all levels helps to achieve the purpose of education.

Social Studies education as a field of study has a lot of contributions towards the attainment of the national objectives. It involves the adult and the young within the society. It helps in the development of their competencies to enable them solve and manage the socio-economic and physical forces arising in their midst. It is not concerned with the study of man per say, rather with the study of

man within the context of his environment, his social, physical, political, economic, cultural and technological environment (Ezegbe, 1994)

The importance of the introduction of social studies education into Nigerian school's curriculum cannot be overemphasized. This is due to the fact that it infuses in the young a love of the country, thereby fostering national unity which is essential to our development as a nation. Social studies education in Nigeria has a special task to perform in transforming Nigeria into a modern state. They include: healing the social, political and religious wounds of the past decades, nurturing the most recent hopes in good ethnic group relationship and nationalism, and the engendering of constructive reforms to make the nation a just and progressive society. It also helps to foster the desire for self-reliance, national efficiency and national pride.

Social studies education contributes in the attainment of national goals through citizenship education. Citizenship education refers to the culture of certain behaviors, knowledge outlooks and values which are found in the culture the individual participates. A citizen however, is one who conforms to certain accepted practices, holds a particular belief that is loyal to certain values, participates in certain activities and conforms to norms which are often local in character.

On the other hand, it contributes in making citizens understand the diversity among the people of Nigeria, and further leads them to see the cooperation and later dependence among them which are among the major elements of nation building. It further plays the role of making the people appreciate and respect the cultural diversity of Nigeria and to realize the need for cooperation, tolerance, unity and people in the country (Sheshi, 2002).

The nation's policy on education is government's way of realizing that part of the national goals which can be achieved using education as a veritable tool. The policy was drafted with the belief that education shall be an instrument per excellence for national development; in the end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development, and the interaction of persons and ideas. Education shall foster the worth and development of the individual, for each individual's sake, and for the general development of the society.

Conclusion

Social Studies as a subject is a facilitator as it allows sharing of ideas among human beings within and outside their environment be it positive or negative, so as to establish strong relationship among her people for a cordial and harmonious living among themselves and also to help acquire all the necessary skills required for life survival through Social Studies Education in Nigeria schools. The perception of cultural diversity for national integration is to accept and respect other ethnic cultures which ensure that people must understand and recognize similarities and differences of others (Erbas, 2013). This will help to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities. People need to be acknowledged in order to develop and increase their awareness, understanding, opinions and appreciation of the different cultures. People should be aware that each culture and ethnic group makes a significant contribution to the world. Similarly, in a diverse society like ours, accepting our humanity first and foremost should give policy expression to the reality of our diversity. Policies that are designed for the inclusion and participation of all citizens irrespective of differences can guarantee social cohesion.

Recommendations

The deformation and contradictions created by diverse contributors and authors in Nigeria and other parts of the world on culture and cultural diversity for national integration the following should be considered:

1. Provision of basic infrastructural facilities necessary for the growth and development of the mass media to facilitate rapid and efficient dissemination of development information on culture and cultural diversity.
2. Addressing the political and economic climates that have pervaded Nigeria in the past several years will help the mass media operate and enhance conducive atmosphere to co-ordinate an efficient performance that will help achieve a self-sustaining development for national integration.
3. One of the most crucial factors of an orderly development process is education. It is essential to every society because every society has a culture. Unless there is education, development may be an uphill task for the community, society or nation.
4. The aspect of technology development is also a very crucial aspect that has to be addressed before the media is able to promote our cultural heritage. Without the input of technology, there will be lack of quality in mass media products.
5. The media should help promote indigenous cultures by being more culturally oriented in their programmes and products. They should help educate people more on their culture and how they can be imbibed, eliminating in the process undesirable negative cultural values.
6. Information to the people from the media should direct their attention on the need for change as well as the measures necessary for bringing about change; raise people's aspirations so that they can see change as very desirable and finally,
7. Schools should constantly teach culture related subjects starting from primary level, secondary level and tertiary institutions.

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