ENHANCING QUALITY EDUCATION FOR TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTER AND VALUES THROUGH SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

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Abstract
The Nigerian educational system is based on the objectives that the system should be able to build a free, just and egalitarian society and a united, strong and self reliant nation among others. Achievement of these objectives depends largely on the quality of education given to the citizens. To develop capacity to learn, acquire knowledge and skills that are essential for transformation of individual and national values, there is need for learners to imbibe socially acceptable behaviours and positive habits that are necessary for development of self and the Nigerian society. Quality must be injected into the educational system to bring about the desired transformation in people. Social Studies is a discipline that helps students to imbibe healthy social habits and values and ensures that the right attitude to life is developed in them. It develops positive attitudes such as honesty, dedication, hard work, justice, integrity, cooperation etc in learners. This paper therefore discusses the importance and relevance of social studies to development of good character and values. These social attitudes are necessary for gainful living of individuals, smooth relationship among the people and healthy development of the society.

The paper recommends that social studies be given priority at all levels of education in Nigeria.

Key words: Social Studies, virtues, positive habits, quality education, transformation, national development.

INTRODUCTION
Education plays a significant role in the lives of individuals and in national development. Education is the acquisition of knowledge, the aggregate of all the process through which a person develops ability, attitude and other forms of behaviour with positive values in the society. Fafunwa (1974) sees education as all effort, conscious and direct, incidental and indirect, made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered desirable in terms of the individuals own needs as well as the needs of the society where that education is based. Education can be formal or informal. Whatever form it takes, what is important is the end products. That is, permanent change in behaviour which affects attitudes and skills of the recipient. The Nigerian education is expected to lead to inculcation of the right type of value and attitudes, training of the mind the understanding of the world and acquisition of skills and abilities with which the individual lives and contributes to the development of the society.

People acquire intellectual and manipulative skills through education and training to develop the nation’s human resources. Experts such as doctors, engineers, accountants, educationists, lawyers etc are products of the educational system of a country. These experts are change agents that are expected to generate ideas to bring about the desired national development. For the educational sector to produce these experts there is need for quality to be entrenched in the system. Quality education requires quality teachers, effective teaching, adequate instructional materials, enabling learning environment etc.
Social Studies was first taught in American schools and colleges due to the belief that learners should be exposed to practical experiences and that education should be for citizenship and life adjustment. Therefore Social Studies was introduced as an experiment to solve one problem or the other. Social Studies aims at inculcation of national unity and consciousness, imbuing the right type of values attitudes for self and national survival, the acquisition of necessary skills, abilities and competencies which individuals need to be able to contribute to national development (Fadeiye 2005). There are series of socio-cultural, economic and political problems while social vices are on the increase in Nigeria today. These suggest devaluation of our traditional moral values. It is on this background that this paper examines the relevance of social studies as a subject through which the young ones and youths can imbibe good character, virtues and values that are essential for transformation of individuals and the nation.

QUALITY EDUCATION

Education is the most important tool for development. It is a fundamental agent of change that gradually transforms people to become refined and civilized. It is through education that nation develops its human resources potentials; it is the key to manpower development. Education enhances social-cultural reconstruction by helping recipients to acquire self reliance, dedication, responsibility, rationality, loyalty, a sense of co-existence, cooperation, fairplay and understanding. In view of this, a growing child should be systematically guided to prepare for the work of life even from the early stage.

Anikwe (2011) states that quality in education means “fitness for purpose”. He asserts that the quality of education to any society must take reference from what that society considers to be the purpose of education. Therefore, quality is somehow interconnected which standards and since standard constitute the essential yardstick for the assessment of values and for comparability and harmonisation, they serve as criteria for quality control in education (Fuandai 2011). Wikipedia in Fuandai (2011) describes quality as the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of a project, service or facility to maximize the probability that minimum standards are being attained by the production process. This implies that when quality is inbuilt in a programme, it must ensure valid and dependable standard.

Quality can also mean any action taken to prevent problem or anything that can work against efficiency and effectiveness of the system. The benefit of education given to citizens implies that they will use the advantage of such education to promote common good which can only emanate as a result of characteristics and values ahead inhibited by such citizens through the process of education. In fact, the clarified objectives of section 20 of the 1979 constitution as analysed by Oluya, Olu-Buraimoh and Okege (1998) states that the educational system shall be the type that motivates and stimulates creativity and draws largely on our traditions of values namely respect for positive Nigerian moral and religious values, ensure continuity of traditional values and their progressive updating to meet modern development, produce responsible citizenship and an ordered society among others. The educational system should help the learners to cultivate the habits, skills, opinion, tastes and virtues that are necessary for preservation of our cultural values and flourishing of moral principles.

Some challenges confronting education that make attainment of quality difficult include poor condition of service of teachers (for example, the Teachers Salary Structure (TSS) is yet to be implemented for teachers in some states in this country), the issue of examination malpractice as a social vice, lack of thorough supervision in government owned schools, outdated methodology of teaching and dwindling infrastructural facilities to mention a few. Kehinde and Akiode (2012) believe that irrespective of circumstantial challenges, a well developed mind will turn any situation into opportunity for advancement and on this basis aid national rebirth (transformation).
This is not the case in Nigeria with the prevailing decay, social ills, moral excesses, violence, cultism and examination malpractices experienced in institutions of learning. This makes some students half-baked becoming cheats, brutes, monsters, mediocre, disgruntled and angry citizens and educated illiterates who are ceaselessly recycled to become the present and future politicians, our masters, who are entrusted with the mandate to govern us (Ojo, 2003). It is expected that these issues will be addressed by government to sanitise the system. However, in order to entrench quality in our educational system, the curriculum should be injected with notions, ideas and value system that help to focus the individual on the essence of nation building, national reconstruction and transformation. It is pertinent that government works on certain factors that promote quality education such as reviewed and/or modified curriculum, quality of teachers, effective teaching, enabling learning environment and adequate provision of instructional materials. There must be quality teachers who are ready to engage in quality teaching. Dada (1999) explains that a teacher is one who is professionally trained to impart knowledge into the younger ones; he is not only trained but also certificated to teach. It is important to engage well trained, qualified, certificated teachers into the system. It also requires people who take delight in and have chosen teaching as career due to conviction, enthusiasm and joy derived from doing it. Good teaching matters in raising the standard of education.

Effective teaching requires effective teachers that possess the knowledge, attitudes and skills that match the demands of the profession. Teacher is the one that postulates educational philosophy and objectives into knowledge and skill and transfer them to students. Teachers should be adaptive, imaginative, resourceful, committed and be systematic and methodical in performing their duties. Teacher is the heart of Nigeria’s educational system and would continue to be both the major indication as well as major determinant of quality education at all levels. The Federal government having realized this concludes that the best way of raising the standard of teachers is through constant in-service training (FGN, 2002). Teacher is in the position of a leader and guide who attempts to shape or mould the behaviour of another person through instruction and practical examples. In this context, the nature of his/her work demands a high sense of responsibility and mature behaviour. Bandele (2003) maintains that the health of classroom interaction is dictated by the quality of instructions given during the lesson and that teacher is the key element for the success of education and school change.

In view of the foregoing, teachers are advised to seek to achieve the highest possible standard in their profession. Fuandai (2011) recommends that teaching profession should also enjoy academic freedom in the discharge of professional duties as well as being consulted on such vital issues as curriculum assessment and the need to work in close collaboration with stakeholders. Teachers should constantly strive to update their knowledge via workshops, conferences, in-service training, seminars etc.

If our educational system must be taken to the next level, government must be prepared to invest heavily in the training and updating of the knowledge, skills and professional competence of teachers. There must also be adequate funding to create conducive and enabling learning environment in our schools at all levels. Adequate provision of instructional materials to aid practical experience in teaching and learning is also mandatory.

VALUE SYSTEM AND EDUCATION

Values are defined as accepted principles or standards of behaviour. Values are used to characterize individuals and society and to explain the basis of attitude and behaviour. Raths (1978) in Olaogun (2012) reserves the term value for those individual beliefs, attitudes, activities
or feelings that satisfy the criterion, among others of having been prized and cherished, incorporated into actual behaviour and repeated in one life. This presupposes that a person who holds certain values will be imbued with certain motivations and those values need to be seen in behaviour and not merely as a passive form of assent. Values are beliefs or convictions that the person considers important, not only for himself but for other people as well. Respect for and development of moral values is vital to human activities in the society. Olaogun (2012) asserts that values meaningfully impact on an individual and prompts one to:

- determine what one regards as rights, good, worthy, beautiful and ethical
- provide standards and norms by which one guides his/her day to day behaviour
- determine one’s attitudes towards the causes and issues such as social, political, economic and industrial with which one comes into contact daily
- determine which ideas, principles and concepts one can accept, assimilate, remember and transmit without distortion

Adewuyan (2002) describes value as beliefs-beliefs that the idealized ways of living and acting are the best ways for the society. Because values are beliefs, they serve to inspire the members of the society to act in the approved ways. Values provide a means of judging quality of actual behaviour. Thus, values are standards and guides to our actions. Adewuyan (2002) maintains that:

value orientation are the basic foundations of social institutions all over the world as the value position taken by individuals and groups have consequences for their immediate and far reaching actions. This explains why there are social values for interaction between people and institutions, moral values derived from written and unwritten code of ethics of the people, economic values of profit and loss, political values of democracy, freedom, autocracy; spiritual values of redemption and several other values.

A key element that needs to be imbibed to determine values involved in living a purposeful life within our cultural systems is education. Our educational system should be such that helps the child to grow into responsible adult, to form character that is capable of making the child appreciate the need to be conscious of his expected social and civic responsibilities. The type of education that can produce best result as Ojo (2003) claims is the one that

helps a child to have a strong character through the subjection of his mind to correct sensations, leading him to developing in himself an attitude of re-construction and appraisal of values to continued self-reformation or self-assessment of his character through self-imposed process of sifting of values from a variety of other values as a result of the interplay between practical experiences, societal and national norms as well as universally accepted principles, all with a view to progressively assert his character as a result of the cross fertilization of many values and ideas as well as the interaction with his environment.

It must be noted that education plays an important role in assisting the individuals to be intimately related to the society by sharing identical value system with other people.
Olaogun (2012) describes education as the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are demanded of him by the society. In order to place education in its rightful position of allowing adult generation to influence the youths through interaction, the system must be shaped by principle of moral standard. There is the general belief that moral law is that which obliges all men and women to refrain from evil and do good. A morally principled person would foster and protect human values of life, justice, honesty, goodness, kindness, selfishness etc and abhor murder, stealing, incest, cheating, bribery, corruption, embezzlement, cultism and other activities regarded as evil by the society. Olaogun (1993) is of the view that morality involves human efforts to deal with good or bad, right and wrong and of what one ‘ought to do’. In view of the above, Kohlberg (1969) advocates that conscious efforts be made to mould adolescents’ values and morals. People should learn and chose to do good and eschew evil, they should learn in such a way that the values and moral principles become part of them, their habits and beliefs. It is therefore germane that schools teach values because people’s values made up of person’s to nation’s values are of the utmost import not only to the individual but also to the society. It is not salutary to a nation’s development if only the home, church and mosque are left to teach values to the nation’s youths and children (Adewuya, 2002).

Suffice to say here that in order for our educational system to deliver expected dividends for the good of the citizens and the nation, towards transformation of individual and national values, certain nutrients that can help it move in the right direction have to be compulsorily provided. This provision is seen in Social Studies which if properly programmed and integrated into the school system and given a place of priority at all levels of education in Nigeria will help entrench old norms and values that are fast losing their grips on our youths and the society.

**TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTER AND VALUES THROUGH SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION**

The objectives of Social Studies in Nigeria stemmed from those objectives given by the Mombassa Conference of African Social Studies Educators in 1968. One of the general objectives of Social Studies teaching in Nigeria is to develop in students positive attitudes of togetherness, comradeship and cooperation towards a healthy nation, the inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness and justice. For the teachers to be able to understand better, Mansaray (1991) grouped the objectives under three broad categories namely knowledge objectives, skill objectives, attitude and value objectives. Development of positive values such as honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness and justice, dedication, loyalty, humility, obedience, respect for human dignity etc are classified as attitudes and values objectives. These objectives show that Social Studies does not only aim at cognitive development of the learners but also develops some values and attitudes that will make them grow into useful, responsible, disciplined and patriotic citizens and future leaders.

The search for the means of instilling good traits, norms and attitude in the citizens through the formal school system led to the inclusion of Social Studies in the curriculum. The subject therefore focuses on developing the right values, attitudes and skills that will help the child to become a responsible citizen, to interact effectively with others and perform civic and national
duties. Nwangwu (1981) confirms that the main justification for the teaching of Social Studies is the contribution it can make to an individual’s ability to act wisely, humanely and reasonably when dealing with other human beings. Effective implementation of Social Studies programme will entrench discipline, open mindedness, trustworthiness and harmonious existence in learners in their prime age.

For the past years, Nigerians have been facing some challenges which have culminated in causing retardation to national development. The problems among others include corruption in high places, grossly inadequate social amenities, unemployment, impoverishment, insecurity of lives and properties, political killings, embezzlement of public funds etc. This sad and preposterous situation necessitates immediate action to intensify effort in ensuring that Social Studies is taught at all levels of education so as to instill discipline and socially acceptable behaviours in the young ones who are being prepared to take up future leadership roles. This is the right time people must have a change of attitude in the areas of human relationships and in governance. Social vices have reached an alarming rate and Social Studies can help to eradicate such harmful practices. The subject is highly indispensable in producing responsible citizens who are conscious of the need for moral uprightness as a vital ingredient for national development. Social Studies will help bring back and renew those traditional values and virtues which have become non-existing to govern the conduct of individuals. With effective teaching of Social Studies in schools and teachers’ emphasis on affective domain, such defects like ethnic and religious crises, issues of minority versus majority, assassination, conflicts and violence, destruction of public properties, looting of public treasury, terrorism and others will reduce.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper has looked at how to enhance quality education for transformation of character and values in learners through Social Studies education. The study examines quality education, analyses the relationship between value system and education and describes Social Studies as a means of instilling good character, virtues and socially acceptable behaviours in learners. In order to achieve the desired character and value transformation, it is recommended that Social Studies be properly programmed and taught at all levels of education in Nigeria.

REFERENCES


