
STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE CONTRIBUTORY ROLES OF SOCIAL STUDIES TO VALUES AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

All human activities including teaching and learning revolve around values. Hence, this study examined the perception of students on the roles of Social Studies to values and character development for social justice in Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was used in the study population. A sample of 388 students from 20 junior secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria was employed using the purposive and simple random sampling methods. The study was guided by one research question and two hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance. A self-designed four-point Likert structured questionnaire which had reliability co-efficient of 0.78 was the main instrument used in collecting data. Data collected for the study were analysed with frequency counts, simple percentages, mean, standard deviation, t-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient. The findings showed that the students had a positive perception of the relevance of Social Studies to values and character development. It equally showed that students' perception of the relevance of the subject to values and character development is neither a factor of gender nor type of institution but rather a matter of conviction. Based on these results, it was recommended that Social Studies should further be encouraged in schools to enhance effective teaching and learning of values and character education for social justice in Nigeria.

Keywords: Character development, Social justice, Social Studies, Students' perception, Moral values.

Introduction

Social Studies education is a value-laden school subject. Everywhere it was introduced, the subject was seen as an intervention programme for addressing some problems arising from human values and social attitudes. The teaching of Social Studies aims at imparting knowledge and providing valuable information necessary for life. Its

basic function is to help students develop desirable social habits, attitudes and values as well as the useful skill of listening, reading, writing, problem solving and those of their intellectual, manipulative, value and moral nature so much needed for the survival of the individual in the society.

The teaching of Social Studies in Nigerian secondary school is seen as one of those avenues of establishing a strong foundation for producing effective citizens that support the country for nation-building. However, one of the aims of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in establishing schools is to teach the young ones to be good citizens who will live and work with others peacefully and happily, while every school subject emphasizes this aspect, Social Studies is one of the special subjects currently identified and charged with this responsibility. This is because Social Studies help to form a better attitude and appropriate norms and values, morals and skills toward the people (Iyama and Iyama, 2007).

Social Studies by its very inter-disciplinary nature offer opportunity to examine, clarify and isolate the needs, assets and problems of the society. Fadeiye (2005) however, explains that Social Studies will enable people to have the right attitude and values to life which is part and parcel of the necessary ingredient needed for a successful career in life. He further highlights some of such social attitudes and values as open-mindedness, honesty, sympathy, obedience, self-reliance, co-operation, respect and trustworthy, hard-work, industry, patriotism, appreciation, resourcefulness, integrity etc. Indeed, the discussion on the meaning of Social Studies seems unending. Onyabe (1978) as quoted by Adetoro (2015) remarks that in the past, Social Studies has been given bad description such as the seamless web; 'a hodgepodge'; 'a schizophrenic bastard child'; 'a mishmash' etc. To the layman, it is the study of peoples in relation, to their physical and social environments. Barr, Barth and Shermins (1977) discover that using 'instructional-goal criterion', Social Studies can be viewed from three ends; as citizenship transmission, as social science and as reflective inquiry. Thus, it becomes a study for the integration of experience and knowledge concerning human relations for the purpose of citizenship education. Ajiboye, Adu and Amosun (2005) define Social Studies as an attempt to foster in young learners a better understanding of human's interactions with the physical and social environments. Hence, Social Studies is concerned with the realities of human's existence. Ogunyemi (2006) equally defines Social Studies as the study of dynamic interactions people have with themselves and elements of their environment. Indeed, in the opinion of the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS), Social Studies is an integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence (NCSS, 1994). By this definition, Social Studies becomes a subject that focuses on participatory democracy. It entails the acquisition of skills and attitudes required for competent and participatory citizenship in a democratic society and in the global community.

Values are defined in the literature as everything from eternal ideas to behavioural actions. According to Huitt (2004), values refer to "criteria for determining levels of goodness, worth or beauty". Rokeach (1973) asserts that "values are affective –

laden thoughts about objects, ideas, behaviour etc that guide behaviour, but do not necessarily require it". The act of valuing is considered an act of making value judgments, an expression of feeling, or the acquisition of and adherence to a set of principles. Iyamu and Iyama (2007) are of the opinion that "values are more or fewer conceptions of what is desirable, which are often perceived in relation to oneself or group". They conceptualized values in the context of matters of importance as distinct from matters of fact. To Adetoro (2015), values are those behaviours and things that we cherish in our society. They include our modes of dressing, mode of eating, mode of greetings, artefacts etc. Values have no universal standard. Along the same line, Udeozor (2005) sees values as those set of benefits held by a people about what is good and desirable in a society.

Indeed, it is pertinent to note that all human activities, including teaching and learning, revolve around values. This is because the question of values arises everywhere in the educational process, whether in the classroom or in respect to the roles of education in the society. Hence, the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) through the National Policy on Education (NPE) places a high premium on the development of human values through schooling. For example, the FME (FRN, 2004) section 1(8) highlights the following values as desired ends for educational activities in the country:

- Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual;
- faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
- the moral and spiritual principle in interpersonal and human relations;
- shared responsibility for the common good for society;
- promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological development of all children; and acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance (FME, 2004:3).

To attain these values, the Federal Ministry of Education (2004) through the NPE recommends that Nigerian education is geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress (FME, 2004). This is why the former American President John F. Kennedy as cited by Isiguzo (1997) says

a child miseducated is a lost child". He states further that "it is essential that the students acquire an understanding of and a feeling of values... of the morally good", otherwise, he with a specialized knowledge - more closely resembles a well-trained dog than a harmoniously developed person.

Moral character development has been a topic of concern for thousands of years. It was central to the development of American schooling but lost favour in the middle of the 20th century (Vessels & Huitt, 2005). However, over the last several decades there has been increased attention paid to the importance of moral character as central to the

purpose of schooling. The development of moral character has been the subject of philosophical and psychological investigation since Aristotle theorized three levels of moral character development: an ethics of fear, an ethics of shame, an ethics of wisdom (Kraut, 2001). Philosophers, psychologists, and educators as diverse as John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, and John Dewey, and as ancient as Confucius, Plato, and Aristotle have viewed the development of moral character as the primary purpose of schooling (Purpel & Ryan, 1976).

The term social justice has received enormous attention worldwide due to its critical impact on economies. Whereas some studies consider it as a fundamental issue in the human race, others regard it as a pre-requisite to peace and tranquillity to a modern society. The phenomenon has however been defined in diverse perspectives to reflect the various viewpoints. Thus, the concept of social justice emphasized collective/state responsibility to create a system of laws to stop people from harming each other (Anku-Tsede, Amankwaa & Amertowo, 2015). The National Council of Welfare (2004) defined Social justice as the distribution of the social and economic resources of society for the benefit of all people. It includes the process through which society attains a more equitable distribution of power in the political, economic and social realms. The concept is based upon the belief that each individual and group within a given society has a right to civil liberties, equal opportunity, fairness, and participation in the educational, economic, institutional, social and moral freedoms and responsibilities valued by the community (Degan & Disman, 2004).

A major aspiration of every country is the desire for rapid development which naturally depend on such factors like quality of leadership, followership, honesty, self – discipline, resource endowments, the use of science and technology, rational utilization of our human and natural resources, national stability etc (Adetoro, 2015). Thus, the general objectives of Social Studies teaching in Nigeria is to develop in students positive attitudes of togetherness, comradeship and cooperation towards a healthy national; the inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard-work, fairness and justice at work and play as one’s contribution to the development of the national goals as well as developing a sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and independence of all members of the local community, and the wider national and international community (Ajiboye, Adu & Amosun, 2005).

According to Nwagwu (1981), any Social Studies lesson that does not achieve its objective in the development of attitudes and values is bankrupt and useless. Such attitudes as cooperation, tolerance, moral and social responsibilities are expected through an understanding of Social Studies. On a general note, Social Studies performs the function among others of influencing man’s attitude positively to social, cultural, economic, political values and the total environment (Ogunsanya, 1984). This implies that is helps in developing the capacity to learn and acquire the desirable social and intellectual skills as well as positive attitudes and values that will enable them to make a positive contribution to the process of nation-building.

A cursory look at what happens in some of our educational institutions reveals the absence of vital ingredient – a sense of value. Some of the campuses, in Nigeria, are characterized by messy living conditions, drinking alcohol, unrestricted sex activities, drug abuse and heinous secret cults with trails of blood and death. Violence in our educational institutions is becoming epidemic and our schools have been turned into war zones, houses of fear and intimidation instead of havens of enlightenment. Hard-work is no more cherished by many, as most students look for earliest means to pass the examination. Cheating on examination and forgery of the certificate are common features (Isiguzo, 1997). Above all, students take to streets at the slightest provocation. All these are caused by a lack of or inadequate inculcation of accurate or appropriate moral values through various school subjects. However, the startling revelation from existing literature on value and character education tend to suggest that even the schools are not fully prepared to facilitate proper value and moral education of the young ones (Nwaubani, 1996). It is against this backdrop that this paper examined the perception of students on the contributing roles of Social Studies to values and character development for social justice in Nigeria.

This study aimed to assess the perception of students on the roles of Social Studies teaching to values and character development for social justice in Nigeria, investigate sex differences and the type of school of the students in relations to their perception of the relevance of Social Studies to values and moral development.

Research Question

This study is guided by one research question:

- i. What is the perception of the junior secondary students on the contributing roles of Social Studies for values and character development?

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were tested in this study at 0.5 level of significance:

- Ho1. There is no significant difference between male and female students' perception of the contributing roles of Social Studies to values and character development.
- Ho2. There is no significant difference between the perception of public and private school students on the contributing roles of Social Studies to values and character development.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of all junior secondary school students in Ogun State, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. At the first stage, purposive sampling technique was used to select 20 co-educational junior secondary schools in the sampled area. At the second stage, simple random sampling technique was employed to select 388 (239 public and 149 private schools) students in the area. A self-designed structured instrument titled

“Relevance of Social Studies to Values and Character Development Questionnaire (RSSVCDQ)” subjected to content and construct validities by Social Studies experts was used for the study. The consisted of twenty five (25) related areas of valuable roles of Social Studies to values and character development for social justice. A Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained from the result of the pilot study conducted among students that were not used for the study. Descriptive statistics of the mean and standard deviation was used to analyze and answer the research question while inferential statistics in form of t-test was used to test the hypotheses.

Results

Research Question: What is the perception of the junior secondary students on the contributing roles of Social Studies to values and character development?

Table 1: Students' Perception of the Contributing Roles of Social Studies to Values and Character Development

No	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Std. D.
1	Other school subjects can teach values and morals better than Social Studies	Nil -	136 (35.1)	146 (37.6)	106 (27.3)	2.92	.79
2	There is no relevance between what they teach in Social Studies and the individual's good behaviour.	Nil -	32 (8.2)	246 (63.4)	110 (28.4)	3.20	.57
3	Social Studies should be taught at all levels (Primary, Secondary and Tertiary) to promote good conduct and stop bad ones	30 (7.7)	164 (42.3)	144 (37.1)	50 (12.9)	2.45	.81
4	Anyone that learns Social Studies in school will become a good citizen	164 (42.3)	222 (57.2)	02 (0.5)	Nil -	3.42	.51
5	Social Studies promotes good interpersonal relationships for ensuring social justice	10 (2.6)	330 (85.1)	48 (12.4)	Nil -	2.10	.38
6	Social Studies helps in the production of good leadership and followership that will ensure social justice.	48 (12.4)	292 (75.3)	48 (12.4)	Nil -	2.12	.78
7	The government should improve the teaching of Social Studies to make it more relevant to the inculcation of values for social justice in Nigeria.	56 (14.4)	332 (85.6)	Nil -	Nil -	3.14	.35
8	Social Studies is the best school subject in the development of morals and values	294 (75.8)	74 (19.1)	12 (3.1)	08 (2.1)	3.69	.64
9	Social Studies learning cannot make people disobey authority.	10 (2.6)	48 (12.4)	198 (51.0)	132 (34.0)	1.84	.74
10	Social Studies should be taught at all levels of education because of its values to the people and the society	104 (26.8)	174 (44.8)	110 (28.4)	Nil -	2.99	.74
Weighted Average						2.79	

Note: Percentages (%) are in parentheses.

Table 1 shows that the perception of the students toward the relevance of Social Studies to values and character development is positive (Weighted mean = 2.79). For instance, the students disagreed that other school subject can teach values and morals better than Social Studies ($\bar{X} = 2.92$) while, they agreed that Social Studies helps in the production of good leadership and followership that will ensure social justice ($\bar{X} = 2.12$). However, the students agreed that Social Studies is the best school subject in the development of morals and values ($\bar{X} = 3.69$). They also agreed that Social Studies should be taught at all levels of education because of its values to the people and the society ($\bar{X} = 2.99$).

Ho1. There is no significant difference between male and female students' perception of the contributing roles of Social Studies to values and character development.

Table 2: Summary of t-test Analysis Showing Difference between Male and Female Students' in their Perception

Variable	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value	df	Sig (P.)	Remarks
Students' Perceptions:							
Male students	164	63.20	6.92				
				.113	386	.910	Not Significant
Female students	224	63.31	7.29				

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference between male and female students in their perception about the relevance of Social Studies to values and character development ($t = 0.113$; $df = 192$; $P > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the perception of public and private school students on the contributing roles of Social Studies to values and character development.

Table 3: Summary of t-test Analysis Showing Difference between Public and Private Secondary School Students in their Perception

Variable	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value	df	Sig (P.)	Remarks
Students' Perceptions:							
Public School	239	63.43	7.30				
				.417	386	.677	Not Significant
Private School	149	62.94	6.90				

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference between public and private secondary school students in their perception about the relevance of Social Studies to values and character development ($t = 0.417$; $df = 188$; $P > 0.05$). The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the findings from the research question showed that the students had a positive perception of the relevance of Social Studies to values and character development. This implies that the students disagreed that other school subjects can teach values and morals better than social studies; they, however, they agreed that the subject is very useful in the society because of its relevance to human moral values. This finding confirmed the submissions of Oak (2008) that Social Studies is aimed at creating educated individuals who can grow up to be responsible citizens of their nation. The study of Social Studies intends to build creative, caring and courteous human beings out of children. Teaching children Social Studies increases their possibility of becoming knowledgeable individuals. Teaching them Social Studies increases their chances that they will adhere to ethical and moral values in their life as this is necessary for building a brighter future for the society (Ogunyemi, 2000; Oak, 2008).

Furthermore, the findings showed that there is no significant difference between the perception of male and female students on the relevance of Social Studies to values and character development. That is, students' gender does not affect the way they perceive the relevance of Social Studies in the development of moral values. This finding contradicts Nuga (2003) which revealed that the sex of students affect their being obedient; avoiding to steal; keeping away from bad friends; being good citizens; behaving well among other people etc. This finding is however consistent with the contention of Kissock (1981), Ogunsanya (1984) and Akinlaye, Mansaray and Ajiboye (1996) that Social Studies, in general, is a value-laden school subject, everywhere it was introduced, the subject was contrived as an intervention programme for addressing some problems arising from human values and social attitudes.

The study also revealed that the perception of public secondary school students was not significantly different from their counterparts in private schools. This implies that students of both public and private schools believed in the efficacy of Social Studies as an important school subject in the inculcation of positive attitudes, morals and appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard-work, fairness, justice and togetherness for the development of the nation. It is very pertinent to remark that irrespective of the type of institution of the students, section 1(7) of the National Policy of Education stressed that the national educational goals which are derived from the philosophy are therefore the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004). Ezegbe (1998) posited that if the goals of Social Studies are to be achieved, a child should be trained to examine his own values and that of the community around him. This is why the question of values becomes 'central' in teaching topics in Social Studies".

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion suggests that students valued the significant roles which Social Studies play in the inculcation of values and character development. Hence, the role of Social Studies in; re-shaping behaviour, acquisition and development of a good sense of judgment, moral and social responsibility cannot be over-emphasized. Social Studies by its nature is citizenship transmission. To this end, most of the students used for the study admitted that Social Studies is the best school subject in the inculcation and development of moral values. Hence, their contention that social studies should be taught at all levels of education because of its values to man and the society. It is evident that the broad objective of Social Studies teaching in the secondary schools, based on the aims of education at the level, further underlines the value dimensions of the subject in Nigeria. Social Studies by understanding human relationship aims at producing citizens with skills, competence, moral values and reasoned judgment required to effectively live, interact, interrelate and contribute positively to the economic development of the Nigerian society in particular and the world in general.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to further enhance the inculcation of positive values and moral development through Social Studies:

- Being a value-laden subject, Social Studies should be encouraged in schools and taught at all levels of education to enhance effective teaching and learning of value and moral education as integrated into the Social Studies curriculum.
- Social Studies educators should help students to develop and nurture values that will make it more likely that they will be able to determine for any situation what the right thing is and do it.
- Being a formal planned institution with rules and regulations, the school should have the responsibility of preserving, improving and extending the moral values inherent in our culture by showing appreciation to it and adherence to its norms. They should encourage the teachers by serving as “*in loco parentis*” to the students.
- In the training of students, educational policy makers must by and large mandate the school to pay very considerable attention to the importance of moral and value education in Social Studies, from the point of view of educating the young children. Equally, parents should be painstaking and loving to help their children to imbibe descent behaviour since a child educated only at school is an uneducated child.

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