

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND NATION BUILDING THROUGH SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

Ehinmidu, Wuraola A. (Mrs.)

Abstract

The development and transferring of the right type of values and goals as duty within the educational sector for purpose of transferring our political life for a stable and democratic society is all marks of Citizenship Education. It is for this reason that this paper focused on some democratic values and the right type of behaviour that must be exhibited by any citizen for effective nation building. This inculcation of democratic values must start right from the primary school, since the product will grow up to be leaders and builders of tomorrow's nation. These are the issues that were discussed in this paper and their implications for national building and integration for a stable Nigerian society.

Introduction

A nation that is multi-lingual and multi-ethnic like Nigeria must be concerned with evolving a stable political system that could help in solving the fundamental problems of nation building. But after three decades of independence, political stability has proved elusive largely because of our inability to operate successfully constitutional and democratic government that could enhance the realization by unity of options. However, the importance of the school system in general and an organised curriculum like social studies in the political system is the only agent of socialization that can organise its programme purposely to work in line with the aspiration of the existing political system. The teaching of democratic values in social studies is part of the concerted effort at producing politically mature citizens via the school system and curriculum.

Theoretical Frame Work Democracy And Democratic Values

For sometime the word democracy has been circulating as a debased currency in the political market place. Politicians with a wide range of convictions and practices strive to appropriate the label and attach it to their actions. Scholars, conversely hesitate to use it without adhering qualifying adjectives because of the ambiguity that surrounds it. The distinguished American political theorist Robert Dahl, even tried to introduced a new term "polyarchy" in its stead, in the hope of gaining a greater measure of conceptual precision.

But for better or worse, we are struck with democracy as the catch word of contemporary political discourse. It is the word that resonates in the people's mind and spring from their lips as they struggle for freedom and for a better way of life. The recent wave of transitions away from autocratic rule has produced a welcome convergence towards a common definition of democracy. By democracy, in the words of Abraham Lincoln is "government of the people; by the people and for the people, (Betrend, (1945). However, democracy means a lot more than that. According to Dahl (1956), democracy means "a society in which ordinary citizens exert a relatively high degree of control over leaders". Another definition of democracy is that put forward by Harvey and Harvey (1974), which says "democracy means much more than one man vote. It necessitates settling affairs according to known rules of government, toleration towards minority views, regular elections, freedom of speech and above all observance of the rule of law". How true can one say this about Nigeria?

Dewey, (1916) asserted that democracy is more than a term of government; it is primarily a mode of association living conjointly. Communicated experiences, the extension in space of individuals who participate in an interest so that each to refer his own actions to that of others to give point and directives to his own. He further went on to say that "democracy is equivalent to the breaking dawn of these barriers of class: race and barriers of class; race and national territory which kept one from perceiving the full impact of their own activity.

Bunting (1977) expresses his own view on accepted image of democratic values. To him for any society or community to experience true democracy some democratic values must be made manifest in the lives of the citizens.

Collins English Learner Dictionary defines values as important, usefulness, a positive behaviour, something that has to do with worth.

Cole, (1985) defines value as the right type of behaviour exhibited by any citizen in the development of his community.

Gejere. (1994) has asserted a generally accepted listing of democratic norms/values that must be present for modern political democracy to exist. These are:

- (i) Honesty
- (ii) Loyalty
- (iii) Patriotism
- (iv) Co-operation
- (v) Fairly conducted election
- (vi) Williness to vote
- (vii) Majority vote

For political democracy to exist, Gejere (1994) further offered a generally accepted listing of what is termed the "procedure minimal" condition that must be present. These are:

- (i) Control over government decision about policy.
- (ii) Practically all adults have the right to vote in the election of officials.
- (iii) Practically all adults have the right to run for election, elective offices in the government.
- (iv) Citizens have the right to seek the right to run for elective offices.

A nation can experience what true democracy is when citizens are encouraged to deliberate among themselves; to discover their differences without relying on some supreme control authority. In essence Citizenship Education and Social Studies Education should promote above listed values of democracy in our youths. This is the task for us as Social Studies Educators.

Nation Building

In prevailing usage in English and other languages, that is central to this paper, "a nation is either synonymous with a state or its inhabitants, or else it denotes a human group bound together by common solidarity - a group whose members, place loyalty to the group as a whole over any conflicting loyalties (Muazu 1992). Similarly, Webster (1992) defines Nation as "the people of a territory united under a single government, country or state. Thus, the Igbo, Hausa - Fulani, Yoruba, Idoma, Edo, Efik and many others in Nigeria all form part of a larger nation which is coterminous with the state. However this brings us to the words of Elaigwu, (1983), challenges of unity among heterogeneous groups on the state. Therefore, in a multinational state, such as Nigeria, it involves attempts at integrating the various groups in order to build a nation out of the state. This process is often referred to as nation building.

Almond and Powell, (1966) refer to nation building as the process whereby people transfer their commitment and loyalty from smaller tribes; villages or petty principalities to the larger central political system. For Nigeria the process of nation building does not involve the transfer "commitments and loyalties" from narrow to parochial level, ethnic groups to a larger political unit. The process of nation building goes beyond that.

Nation building, therefore is the widespread acceptance of the process of state building. It is the creation of a political community that gives a fuller meaning to the state. However, in Nigeria the process of nation building has been punctuated by conflicts. Given the diversity of groups involved in this process, conflicts are inevitable. According to Elaigwu (1983) it is not these conflicts and the ability of the system to cope with such conflicts without threatening the consensual values on which the association is grafted that are important on the process of nation - building, though, an accumulated experience of resolving conflicts between antithetical forces is after, all one of the great indices of national integration. What role should Social Studies Education and Citizenship Education play in the promotion of national development? The implication to national development is hereby examined.

Implication For National Development

Social Studies has as one of its goals the training of citizens for useful living in the society. In most countries of the world, the evaluation of Social Studies was based on the idea of making

Promoting Democratic Values And Nation Building Through Social Studies Education

education relevant to society's needs. It is for this reason that Citizenship Education cannot be separated from Social Studies Education.

Prawith, (1971) defines Citizenship Education as that learning that has to do with the norms which guides the behaviour of individuals in their role as members of the society. If there be peace, harmony and tranquility and to ensure the continuity of the society members of such society ought to know and imbibe the value or the social strings that bind the society together. The members ought to be taught to be responsible and committed to the ideas of the society. The process of inculcating these values is Citizenship Education.

Citizenship Education is so important that any society, or government that neglects or takes it lightly is short sighted visionless and has no concern for the continuous existence or stability of such a nation. The very basis of democratic living cannot hold if Citizenship Education is not given its rightful place in the society. Citizenship Education prepares individuals for the duties and responsibilities which are expected of them in the society.

Nigeria as an aspiring democracy has always had Citizenship Education as a central focus and the national objectives and goals of education has been always reflected these ideas.

The national objectives as stated in the Second National Development Plan include the following:

- The building of;
- (a) a free and democratic society;
 - (b) a just and egalitarian society;
 - (c) a united; strong and self reliant nation;
 - (d) a great and dynamic economy and;
 - (e) a land bright and full of opportunities for all.

To achieve these objectives education has been seen as a vital tool and the national objectives could be achieved through the inculcation of the following values;

- (1) respect for the worth and dignity of individuals
- (2) faith on man's ability to make rational decisions
- (3) moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations
- (4) shared responsibilities for the common good of all members of the society.

The state of being young is temporary. Our youth will grow up and in time will operate the affairs of the nation. As we grow old, the reins will slip from our hands; the way youth are built will inevitably determine the shape of things to come. The school is one of our instruments for building our prospects. But do our youth; who get most of their ideals for co-operative living from our schools know enough about democracy and co-operation to sustain them in an ever changing world? Available evidence (Joof 1992) show that our youth do not understand and cherish ideals like democratic values and the institutions of democracy. One has only to talk to the first ten secondary and primary schools pupils he meets to realize their gross misconception of the true nature of democracy and effective citizenship that could enhance the attainment of nation-building. To enhance the inculcation of knowledge, value, attitude and skills in individuals for effective citizenship. The Federal government has therefore outlined certain education goals, which has been stated in the National Policy on Education which has already been referred to in this paper.

In order to enhance the Nigeria philosophical goals via Social Studies Education based on its objectives, various strategies and techniques were employed in the teaching and learning process. In Social Studies classes. One major facet, for which Social Studies Education is well known for is citizenship Education. The school system is the only agent of socialization that can organise its programme purposely to work in line with the aspirations of the existing political system. The teaching of democratic values in Social Studies is part of the concerted effort at producing politically mature citizen via the school system and the curriculum.

To buttress the importance of Social Studies education in Nigeria for the enhancement of stable democracy and nation building through citizenship Education in a study by Madubuike (1985), he found that:

Ehinmidu, Wuraota A. (Mrs.)

- (1) Social Studies instruction helps in the development of nationalism and patriotism. In this respect most of his respondents agreed that Social Studies instruction promotes love for one's country, awareness for civic responsibilities and develops ideas and attitudes for national unity.
 - (2) The teaching of Social Studies also helps to produce citizens who appreciate Nigerian culture, the politics of the society and are capable of taking decision.
 - (3) Develops in citizens the right attitude and values towards environmental conservation.
- The finding of these study is in congruence with the view of Dubey et al (d 1993) that through Social Studies instruction, children learn to respect themselves and others, to share with others, to make rational decisions and use criticisms for self improvement.

Conclusion

From the discussion in this paper it is evident that Social Studies education is very crucial towards the promotion of democratic values and nation building therefore Citizenship Education must be enforced right from the primary school since what obtains in the larger society (outside the school) will erode the role of Social Studies Education in enhancing the realisation of nation building in Nigeria.

Social Studies educators are therefore, called upon to see to the fulfillment of Citizenship Education for nation building. Because the teachers through the discipline can inculcate the right type of values and attitudes that will shape the political behaviour of today's pupils, students and tomorrow's adult citizens.

References

- Adaralegbe, A. (1980) *Social Studies Teaching and Problems*, Benin Ethiope Publishing Company.
- Adeyoyin, F. A. (1977) *Social Studies Education in Nigeria* (Unpublished, M.A. Thesis) Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
- Agbese, D. (1994) "Remaking Nigeria" *Newswatch Magazine* Oct: pg. 13 Almond, G. and Powell, B (1966) *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach*. Boston, Little, Brown.
- Atanda, J.P. and Aliyu, A. Y. (1983) "Political Development" (Ed) Proceedings of the National Conference on Nigeria Since Independence, Vol. Zaria Maror.
- Brogen, D. W. (1960) *Citizenship Today* Chapel Hill, North Carolina University of North Carolina Press.
- Cole, S. J. (1985) *Education and Political Development* princeton University, press (New York).
- Dahl, R. A. (1956)^ *Reference to Democratic Theory*. Chicago Dewey, J. (1961) London. Democracy and Education. Macmillan Education Ltd Ehinmidu, W. A. (1996) *Evaluation of Teachers And Administrators perception of Democratic Values in Primary Social Studies Programme of Kaduna State*. (Unpublished M. Ed Thesis) Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.
- Elaigwu, J.I. (1983). Nation Building and Political Development in Nigeria: The Challenges of Unity in a Heterogeneous Society. A paper presented at the National Conference on Nigeria Since Independence, Zaria.
- Gejere (1994). Evaluation of The Effective Domain in Social Studies (Unpublished M. Ed Thesis) A. B. U. Zaria.
- Joof, G. W. (1992) "Social Studies and Education for Democracy. A paper presented at the 12.^h Annual Conference of SOSAN, Zaria. March.