

## AN EVALUATION OF RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

By

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### Abstract

*Social Studies education came into being in Nigeria in 1963 as an integrated subject. Its foremost objectives are promotion of effective citizenship and other values that promotes national consciousness cum personal development. Also, religious education is to teach religious and ethical codes to uphold the society. These codes are to develop good character and spiritual life in the society. These codes are to enhance the vital roles of religion in the life of individuals as a useful tool for the implementation of moral codes in the society. These codes form the nexus between religious education and social studies education as instruments for effective citizenship development. The effectiveness of these subjects in the performance of these roles call for evaluation. However, the roles of evaluation in religious and social studies curriculum education are to determine the effectiveness of what are taught and learnt as a confirmation that learning has taken place. This paper examined the various areas to be evaluated in religious and social studies education. It also emphasized the various types of evaluation available to the subjects' curriculum.*

**Keywords:** Assessment, Religious, Social Studies Education.

### Introduction

Evaluation plays important roles in curriculum, teaching and learning. The way of evaluating what is learnt dictates the way in which learning takes place. Whatever the teacher stresses will determine what the students will selectively address himself/herself to, during learning for purpose of examination. If a thoughtful reorganization of knowledge is emphasized during teaching, but the testing and grading are confined to the mastery of facts, the later learning is reinforced. If creativity and thinking are stressed in evaluating learner's progress, factual cramming will be reduced.

According to Ogundare (2003) educational evaluation is a systematic process that determines the effectiveness of educational endeavour in the light of evidence. Evaluation is said to have two important roles to play in teaching-learning process, it gives the teacher information regarding the level of students' learning, and it provides information that can be used in planning future lessons (Oyedeji, 1998). Various types of evaluation are deployed in evaluating the effectiveness of educational endeavour, which includes religious and social studies education. But for proper evaluation of the effectiveness of educational endeavour whether religious and social studies education, evaluation must cover the student performance, the teachers effectiveness, relevance and adequacy of educational content and methods to the programme objectives.

### The nature and importance of evaluation

The place of evaluation in education is indispensable. All stakeholders in the education sector consider evaluation very important and valuable for conducting fair and reliable assessment of learners. In curriculum development, evaluation spread across the curriculum process and school programme, which involve the educational aims, goals and objectives, learning experiences and activities, content, methodology of instruction, organization of learning experiences cum content and the evaluation procedures itself. Evaluation in this regard is needed to determine the level of behavioural change and measure the actual outcome in order to ascertain if the stated objectives have been achieved. Therefore, it is the duty of all stakeholders in the educational sector to evaluate in order to determine whether learners are up to date with the stated learning objectives. According to Okpala et al (1993) cited in Oyediji (1998) evaluation is a process of gathering valid information on attainment of educational objectives, analyzing and fashioning information to aid judgement on the effectiveness of teaching or an educational programme. It is also defined as the provision of information through formal means, which means that it is a process of ascertaining decision in areas of concern, selecting appropriate information and collecting and analyzing information in order to report a summary of data useful for decision makers in selecting among alternatives (Ogundare, 2003). It is said to involve judgement about nature and desirability of any demonstrated changes. This involve the assessment of the chosen learning experiences, content used and manner of their use with a view to determine their desirability or efficacy in bringing about the expected behavioural change (Sotonwa, 1995).

The roles of evaluation in the learning-teaching process cannot be ignored. In the view of Oyediji (1998), it has two important roles: it gives the teaching information regarding the level of student learning and it provides information that can be used in planning future lessons. When carrying out evaluation, it is important to assess relevant student behaviour, the background factors that can inhibit this behaviour, effect of the evaluation programme on learners motivation and learning and also it is necessary to evaluate all phases of the curriculum process with a view of taking decision about educational objectives.

Evaluation is required in the three domains of learning to determine the attainment of the educational objectives which covers the cognitive skills, performance skills and to some extent attitudes or feelings. Therefore, the three domains, cognitive, affective and psychomotor need evaluation with different evaluation techniques because the required information is different from each domain. Hence, the need for types of evaluation.

### **Types of Evaluation**

Evaluation is divided into three types and the teacher needs all the categories to get continuous feedback to plan, monitor and evaluate his/her instruction.

#### **Diagnostic Evaluation**

This is carried out to obtain prerequisite information about programme. The information is to assist in further evaluation. This evaluation is used to detect possible learning problems and to right place learners in the proper course. It gives teachers adequate information about learners' knowledge, attitudes and skills.

#### **Formative Evaluation**

This guides the development and implementation of a programme. The main task of this evaluation is to identify possible problems and then describe and monitor all the activities. Formative evaluation is incorporated into the programme or curriculum right from the planning stage. Its major task is to ensure the success of the programme. Therefore, there is a special

attention on finding the mistakes in the programme and providing monitoring and corrective mechanism.

### **Summative Evaluation**

The purpose of this type of evaluation is to determine students achievement for grading purposes. The use of summative evaluation is to know if a student have passed or failed. Summative evaluation takes the form of quizzes, tests, term papers, reports, personal observation of students, class contribution or annual examination.

Evaluation in educational endeavour is continuum and involves all the three types of evaluation, diagnostic, formative and summative. In most cases useful information are gathered about achievements in motor skills or attitude before and during learning process. Whenever a problem is discovered, solution could be provided immediately to correct the situation especially when it is discovered that learners are not responding to questioning, which is possible when a concept is not comprehended.

### **Evaluation in Religious and Social Studies Education**

In the determination of the position of evaluation in religious and social studies education, it is necessary to take a look at the subjects as they affect the national objectives of education. This will make us to take a cursory look at the philosophy of education in Nigeria as contained in the National Policy on Education (2004) where it is admitted that the subject (which subject?) is a veritable vehicle for the achievement of the national objectives.

The philosophy and objectives of the nation are as follows;

- A free and democratic society
- A just and egalitarian society
- A United, strong and self-reliance nation
- A great and dynamic economy
- A land of bright and full opportunity for all citizens

On the other hand, the national educational aims and objectives are as follows;

- The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity
- The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society
- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around
- The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

A dissection of the aims and objectives brings out key words and phrases such as “national consciousness”, “national unity”, “values”, “attitudes”, “understanding of the world”, “skills, abilities and competences”. However, a formalized and systematic body of knowledge about the nation will expose the students to the need to develop national consciousness and unity. For this to be realized, there is need for a school subject to help in teaching and learning the nature of the nation and the relevance of unity. Also, efforts to teach the right type of values and attitudes have to be made in designated school subjects.

As at today, social studies and religious education are in a better positions to achieve these objectives, (Otelaja, 2008). The nature, content, and method of social studies puts it in a vantage point for nation building, this view was corroborated by Ogundare (2000) who opines that among the existing bodies of knowledge or disciplines, social studies had the comparative advantage of being very suitable for the accomplishment of such objectives relating to national

consciousness, national unity and inculcating of right type of societal values all of which will lead to effective nation building.

Having taken a cursory look at the national objectives and the national objectives of education, it is pertinent to look at what to evaluate in religious and social studies education programme. The question now is; what do we evaluate in religious and social studies education? To ascertain if religious and social studies education has achieved or is achieving the objectives of the nation as prescribed in the national objectives of education (2004) and also to determine if the learning-teaching process is effective in a way that religious and social studies students can really use the subjects to solve societal problems as specified by the main objectives of the subjects as problems solving subjects. There is need to look beyond the classroom evaluation of the subjects to determine their effectiveness. Therefore, the following areas call for evaluation process as well:

- The programme
- The teacher
- The student
- Religious and social studies materials

**The Programme:** The programme is one of the issues that constitute attainment in religion and social studies, also important is the method. Programme evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of the programme in meeting its goals and objectives. It is a process of gathering and analyzing information about school programme in order to take a decision or communicate to others involved in the decision making process.

Programme evaluation is designed to sample students' comprehension and ability across groups and geographical locations to guide curriculum planning. It is also used to assess the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. It can be conducted at two levels, relatively informally at the classroom level and the school division level. At the classroom level, programme evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of the programmes in meeting the needs and prescribed objectives. It is an ongoing programme that does not need to be conducted at the end of the programme. For example, if a particular lesson is poorly received by learners or if learners do not demonstrate the intended learning objectives from a unit of study, the problem should be investigated and changes made. Evaluating the programme at the classroom level makes teachers become reflective practitioners. The information gathered in programmed evaluation are used in making decisions for improvement.

**The Teacher Evaluation:** The achievement of the learning objectives is the responsibility of the teachers and is the main constituent of evaluation. According to Ogundare (2003) social studies encourages acquisition of many kinds of abilities, understanding and skills. He posited that, for the classroom teacher, these abilities and skills are those that are related to the topic and content areas, which teachers and students choose to study. Religious education is not an exception.

Teacher evaluation has the purpose of improving teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. It is based on characteristics of good teaching performance and take different forms. The most common which is practiced by every committed teacher is teacher self-evaluation. This is where a teacher considers what has taken place within a lesson and determine how it might have been improved. In religious and social studies education programmes, teachers should assess their strengths and weaknesses, and identify areas where improvement is needed.

**The Student Evaluation:** The central learning processes and activities in religious and social studies education are concerned with exploration of questions raised by the teacher and to some

extent the learners, which include definition, observation, classification, generalization, verification and application. All these are essential as the subject matter. The student's evaluation therefore, can be in the following areas as presented by Ogundare (2003).

- i. **Information:** Knowledge and understanding of facts and terms.
- ii. **Concept and Principles:** These involve grasping of key concepts and principles.
- iii. **Methods, Techniques and Skills:** These involve an understanding of certain methods, techniques and skills and an ability to use them. For instance, ability to interpret data such as graphs, tables and document and ability in method of inquiry such as carrying out an experiment or conducting social survey or other types of fieldwork.
- iv. **Application:** An ability to apply all the above understanding and skills in the context of new situation. This will involve reasoning and critical thinking and may engage the thinkers in the realm of analysis, synthesis and evaluation.
- v. **Attitudes and Change in Attitudes:** This is a difficult area but not an impossible task. Since there are moral and value issues involved, the assessment procedures for evaluating attitudes become technical.

**The Materials:** These are the materials or objects that help teachers to simplify lessons for the students. It make teaching effective and lively and allows the students to comprehend fully. Materials transmit information, ideas and notes to their students and disseminate information in a way that will change their aptitude, habits and practice. Effective decision making is based on an outline of criteria for evaluating prospective materials, if planners take time to specify the factors that are most important in choosing materials before beginning the review process. Attention needs to be focused on characteristics to be able to differentiate between useful and non-useful materials. Criteria for this purpose may come from different sources and can raise a number of significant issues. The importance of each issue will be related to the primary needs and concerns which have developed from the planning process. Criteria would most certainly be found in decisions made to this point. For example;

1. Do materials fit within the planned rational scope of the programme?
2. Will their use help to ensure the programme?
3. Is the achievement of objectives created for this programme possible with the materials?

The above questions and many others will be asked about the sustainability or otherwise of available materials to the programme. When available materials look inappropriate, planners will find out that they can often adapt them to their needs or extract points or ideas which are considered important.

### **The Interface between Religious and Social Studies Education**

The relationship between religion as a social institution and the larger social cultural system is a complex one. According to O'Dea (1966) cited in Popenoe (1977) "There is ... a two way relationship here. Not only social conditions affect the rise and spread of ideas and values, but ideas and values once institutionalized in a society affect the actions of men. Hence the sociology of religion must not only study the effects of social structure upon religion, but also the effects of religion upon social structure".

In view of the above, religion can affect the society in two general manners, it can support and maintain it, on the other hand it can serve as a tool for change. Marx (1969) cited in Popenoe (1977) said that "religion was the opiate of the masses", in terms of its supportive or stabilizing function. He contended that religion lulled individuals into accepting the conditions of their society, removing their incentive to demand change and thus should be considered an active ally

of the established social order, an anti-revolutionary agent. Therefore, religion to most sociologists is a strong force of social stability. It is also seen as a divisive force – a rallying point around which the disaffected may gather to attack other institutions and seek social change.

Modern systems of religious belief is beyond supporting other elements of religion, but they emphasise moral propositions such as the equality of all people, which are seen as important and inviolable truth. The foregoing and the following, which are regarded as the social stabilization functions of religion form the interface between religious and social studies education.

1. Religion renders the society's basic norms and values more important and also more acceptable. The existence and observation of social norms are the foundation of all social organization. By giving these norms and values moral meaning, even making some of them sacred, religion consoles people for the sacrifices they make when individual wishes conflict with social necessity. Respect for our parents is a social norm and one of the values taught at home and school. This is very important and treated with great respect by both Christians, Muslim and all regions. In other words, it is sacrosanct religiously. Social norms and values gain more weight and power and conformity to them is strongly enhanced because they are integrated into a system of moral and religious meaning.
2. Religion helps to control social deviance. Though secular society provides for social control through the rewards and punishments of other human beings and the social system, religion adds an additional dimension termed the supernatural. Religion adds a kind of supernatural detective power to the social control process. Those who deviate from the commandments and norms are threatened with 'supernatural punishment', such as constant bad fortune or everlasting torture after death. Therefore, religion extends the scope of sanction on behaviour and reinforces the society's system of social control.
3. Religion emphasizes the basic similarity of all human beings. Much of the appeal of religion is directed toward certain elements of human conditions like anxiety in the face of the unknown or unfamiliar, regret over past mistakes and lost opportunities, fear of death, the desire to transcend the limits of body and self, the need for love and acceptance from others. Through religion as a social institution, people are made to be aware that the aforementioned elements are not personal but universal. This kind of awareness helps to create a sense of belonging and community interdependence. Therefore, with this feeling of shared interests comes a realization of mutual dependence and need for social organization to ensure the survival of human race.
4. Religion helps reconcile individuals to the hardship and inequities of society and helps those who have become alienated to readjust. There are kinds of religious belief and commitment that are held more strongly among the poor and oppressed in the society, because such people are in need of a stronger social bond than that provided by the social system that has placed them at the bottom. Since they are not being well compensated in the usual ways for their participation in society, they need alternative sources of rewards for social cooperation. Religion provides the necessary rewards and social bonds. Every religion offers its followers the chance, by observing its principles, to achieve a high moral status. This moral status can help to compensate for their low social status. Religion advocates charity, mercy, kindness, the sharing of one's blessings with the less fortunate, the renunciation of pride and vanity. Though, it may do nothing for the actual condition but such advocacy assist to ease the disaffections of the poor and the power less.

5. Religion binds the community together through rituals of worship and observance of sacred powers. Many rituals and forms of worship required common participation and as a result serve to bring people together and this lead to the strengthening of the bonds between them.
6. Religion offers support when other social organizations are undergoing stress and change. Memberships figures of religious denominations vary in relation to prevailing social conditions. For instance, during war or social upheaval, more people join the established religious organizations and more sects are founded than in times of social stability (Popenoe, 1977).

In a nutshell, religious education and education found a confluence social factors via the above expressed points. Both working towards the development of an effective citizens, an individual that can think for himself and be able to face challenges and subdue such challenges whenever and wherever such occur, and be able to contribute his/her quota to the development of the society an individual that is innovative and self-reliant.

### **Recommendation**

Effective evaluation in religious and social studies education, aside from being a product of clearly formulated curriculum objectives which professionals have developed and adopted, efforts should be made to evaluate the ways by which the subjects can achieve their stated curriculum objectives in tandem with the nation objectives and educational objectives in such a way that the production of effective citizens will be achieved. An effective citizen is one that can think on his own and for himself/herself in order to be able to affect the society positively. He/she is also one who can contribute his/her quota to the development of the society.

Therefore, it is recommended that priority must be given to the programme evaluation methodology while the teachers to impart the knowledge must be experts. The students comprehension of the learning objectives should be evaluated and efforts should be made to ensure that what is learnt in the classroom is transferred to the larger society to solve social problems through experiential learning. The effectiveness of resource materials should be determined and ascertained for the attainment of stated objectives.

### **Conclusion**

Social studies education is a problem solving subject. Countries of the world have used the subject to solve social problems as applicable to them. Therefore efforts should be made in Nigeria to take the subject beyond classroom instructional level by introducing experiential learning; a situation will bring concrete into really, as done in the United States of America. Therefore, proper evaluation of the subject is needed to be done by experts and a review of the programme carried out to meet its objectives of solving societal problems.

Religion helps to meet a variety of basic human psychological needs. It provides support and consolation that help to overcome the human fear of the unknown and anxiety about the future; it gives human existence a meaning and purpose; it provides an opportunity to transcend the everyday reality of the present, it also helps to give individuals sense of identity and to ease transitions through the crucial stages of life. Religion can influence the larger socio-cultural system while in turn, being influenced by it (This is similar to how the environment influences man and man influences the environment in return, in social studies). Religion can be both a

cohesive force acting to maintain the established social system and divisive influence helping to effect social change as opined by Popenoe (1977), in same vein way as social education.



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