EDUCATIONAL THEORIES FOR A NEW WORLD: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

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Abstract

The paper explored the way forward for education in Nigeria with a special focus on Social Studies. It pointed out that Social Studies is not living up to expectation in Nigeria as the issues it is meant to address are still besieging Nigeria. It that one of the reasons is that the subject is a colonial heritage, passed onto Nigerians by colonial masters. The paper pointed out that for Nigeria to work, she must look in-ward and come up with her own theories, theories that will take the Nigeria environment into consideration. Some definitions of theory and its implication were reviewd, as well as some advantages and implications of theory. The paper also took a look at stages of theory and some obstacles in the formulation of theory. Some implications of having Nigerian theories were outlined and suggestions made on how to come up with a sound theory for Social Studies to be a success, thereby moving Nigeria forward, a Nigeria where everyone will live in harmony.

Keywords: Theory, Implication, Social Studies, Consensus.

Introduction

The Federal Republic of Nigeria through the National Policy on Education (2004) sees education in Nigeria, Social Studies inclusive, as a tool of excellence for effecting national values and total development. Social Studies as a subject taught in schools across Nigeria is all about man and how he relates with his environment. The environment is subdivided into social, physical and artificial environments. The social environment is about how man relates with his fellow man. It shows man as a social being that shares the environment with others. He interacts with other people in the environment and over time develops the feeling of affinity. This way communities and groups are formed with rules guiding behaviours of the members of the group. Man as a member of a group believes in value consensus, he enters into a social contract with others doing things in accordance with an agreement that establishes moral and political rules of behavior. He observes and upholds the principles of the group he belongs to. Man also avoids groups that does not share the principles which his own group stands for, he views them as deviants and in some cases tries to lobby other groups or force them to conform to his group's principles or code of conduct.

The physical environment is the natural environment such as water, ocean, mountains, forest, land, the atmosphere, mineral resources and so on. We also have the artificial environment which includes anything created by man such as an automobile, air conditioner and so on, for his comfort. Man cannot exist comfortably without the social, physical as well as the artificial environment. For man to survive he must come up with ways to live harmoniously with other members of the environment. Unfortunately, man is not living harmoniously with his social and physical environment as a result of his activities; such activities as bush burning, deforestation, oil spillage, intolerance, and exploitation and so on.

It has been cited earlier that man is a social being, who happens to be a member of a community or group, who believes in value consensus and in some cases view persons who are not affiliated to his group as deviants and tries to lobby them to see things through the eyes of his group, and in some cases, he applies the use of force

to make them conform, which is one of the problems this great nation called Nigeria is currently battling with. In every part of the country there is one form of insecurity or the other. In the north, there is the problem of Boko Haram which till date their grievances is not known but Nigerians are seeing and feeling their negative impact in the country, socially and economically. Lives of soldiers and civilians are lost on a daily basis, properties are destroyed on a daily basis and there is insecurity everywhere. In the east gun men are having a filled day and the government are at a loss on what to do. In the south-south there is kidnapping, the air is no longer clean as a result of the activities of illegal refineries scattered all over the area. Ritual killings, examination mall practice is now the order of the day, armed robbery, cultism, prostitution. Ethnic sentiment is so strong that some people in the east are agitating for secession because they feel marginalized. The list is endless.

In an address at the 58th (7th quadrennial) national conference of delegates of the Nigeria Union of Teachers the Nigeria Labour Congress chairman Ayuba (2022) lamented that terrorism has taken root in the North-east and North-west of the country with bandits attacking towns and villages, wreaking havoc. Ayuba went on that in the South-west communities, worship centers have been attacked, highways blocked and travelers kidnapped, pointing out that in the South-South, militant activities has impacted on the environment and socio-economic activities including schools. The author decried the situation in the South- East where indigenes and non-indigenes' are targeted and gunned down by secessionist.

Ayuba (2022) citing Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attacks (GCPEA) revealed that about 2,295 teachers have had untimely death in Bornu, Yobe and Adamawa states at the hands of terrorists. Ayuba also revealed that The United Nations International Children Emergency Fund in a report in 2017 estimated that about 1400 schools have been damaged and in 2018 1500 schools have been forced to close down in the North-east as a result of terrorist activities.

Dr Hamid, the Executive Secretary of the Universal Basic Education Commission in his goodwill message at the 58th (7th quadrennial) National delegates conference of the Nigeria Union

of Teachers held in September 28th to 30th, admitted without doubt that Nigeria is going through an unusually difficult phase in her history with the large scale violence in many parts of the country. The problems just outlined and every other problem is as a result of greed and intolerance. We fail to realize that we do not need too much and our differences are supposed to compliment us and not to divide us.

Social Studies is meant to nip these problems in the bud and make man live in harmony with the environment but Social Studies in more than its fifty years in existence in Nigeria has not been able to achieve this feat, as Nigerians are still battling with them. It is believed that the Social Studies curriculum that has been in operation in Nigeria is a colonial legacy, left behind by our colonial masters. It is a product of their ideologies, which is not suitable for the Nigerian environment. There is need to re-define, re-explain, re-focus and re-package Social Studies context, content and methods to suit the Nigerian environment. One way to successfully achieve this is to come up with new educational theories for Social Studies, just as Medhat, F. (2012) in his work 'implication of social learning theory' pointed that teachers can use techniques learned from different theories to help the student succeed and reduce the stress that affect the student's success and performance, hence, the thrust of this paper.

Conceptual Issues

Theory according to lgbo (2003), is a set of systematically related propositions, which specify causal relationships among variables. It is a set of ideas which attempts to explain how a thing or something works. Okodudu (2007) defined a theory as 'a set of reciprocally connected concepts, definitions and propositions that present an ordered and planned view of phenomena by pointing out relations among variations with a view of explaining and predicting the phenomena.'

University of Florida (1996) defined theory as 'a connected set of construct and principles about a phenomenon, the reason being to explain or predict the phenomena.' Cambridge dictionary defined theory as a formal declaration of conditions on which a subject of

study is anchored or of ideas that are proposed to explain a fact or occurrence, or more generally a personal belief or explanation. Vocabulary dictionary saw theory as a well-established explanation of some part of the nature, a structured system of acceptable knowledge that applies in a number of circumstances to explain a specific set of phenomena.

Importance of Theory

Theory is very important as it has benefits, amongst which is that put forward by Moore cited in University of Florida (1996). Theory he argued provides concepts to give our observation names and to explain the connections between constructs. Moore also pointed that theory helps us to explain observations and how to bring about change. Moore went on to argue that theory is a guide in research which increases its ability to solve other problems in different times and places.

Moore revealed that theory goes through three stages of development: one of the stages is the speculative stage. In this stage attempts are made to explain what is happening. The second stage is the descriptive stage which has to do with gathering descriptive data to give a description of what is really happening. The third stage is the constructive stage. This stage takes a review of old theories with a view to develop new ones or improve on existing ones based on continued research. Helpme.com outlined some advantages of theory to include the following:

> Theories are necessary in order to have a better under-standing of people's behavior. It helps to analyze people individually or as a group and as a part of the entire society. Theories are a beneficial tool that guide in the process of asking questions, complete the assessment and develop a plan. Theory gives us an insight of what to expect or predict about a phenomenon. Theory gives credibility as more knowledge is gained as a clear explanation of what we believe and opportunity to expand that knowledge by discovering more information about people's behavior in our environment.

Afroze (2021) also outlined some advantages of theory to include pointing out errors in our knowledge and help in correcting them. Theories help in research as they act as instrument of investigation by providing assistance in preparing research design. It points to possible problems and meaningful hypotheses that form the basis of new investigation and studies.

Obstacles to Theory Formulation

Theory building passes through processes, social theory which Social Studies is part of, is scientific and diverse in nature as it is based on practical study of complex and variable phenomena. They must be accurate, deep, systematic and have a long-term conclusion. Formulating a theory is a challenging task as the slightest carelessness of a theorist can mar the formulation of the theory.

Afroze (2021) revealed some likely obstacles or problem theorists may come across in formulating a theory successfully. One such obstacle is perceptual complexity. This has to do with concepts which is one of the building blocks of theory. It is absolutely necessary for the concept to be scientific, clear, logical and accurate. As the theories are not universal; they have to do with the social aspect of the environment. Another likely obstacle is lack of universality. Afroze explained that Social events are the basis social theories are related to country's time and situation. It is not always possible to apply the conclusion of an event that happened in one country's time and situation to another country's time and situation.

Afroze further pointed that the variability of social events can be an obstacle to the formulation of theories. He explained that a holistic study of a social event may take a substantial amount of time, by the time a study of a social phenomenon is completed and conclusion come out of it, by then there may be a possibility of change in the nature of that social phenomena. He went on to say that social events are complex and complicated, it is not easy to understand them completely through studies as a result they sometimes come out confused and ambiguous.

Implication of theory formulation on Social Studies

Medhat (2012) in a work titled implication of social learning theory, pointed some of the implications of applying theories to teaching a subject, including Social Studies. Medhat pointed that teachers can use techniques from different theories to help students succeed and to reduce the stress that affects students' success and performance. The writer went on that theory that is cognitive will help students succeed at school by promoting self- efficacy, self-esteem and self – regulation. Medhat also put forward that a theory that has to do with modeling will help in motivating the students, this is important because students are comfortable with their role model and in that condition, learners learn and imbibe what they are taught. Teachers should be a model to their students by the way they conduct themselves. Students will learn and copy what a friendly teacher teaches and does. The writer argued that Parents' involvement in the student's learnings is also a step in the right direction, so a theory that advocates for parents' involvement will be a welcome development. If a parent agrees with the teacher on any issue, it will enhance the resolve of the student. Medhat rounded up by saying that inappropriate behaviors can be addressed with theories, as the teacher discusses the consequences and rewards of various behaviors. This will eradicate inappropriate behavior and increase appropriate behavior.

Universally, theories are propounded in a society to address issues peculiar to that society, a Nigerian theory (propounded taking the Nigeria environment into consideration) will enhance teaching, and teachers will be able to pass on knowledge to the students easily. This will reflect in the society in the form of peaceful co-existence and the vices we are presently experiencing shall melt into oblivion. Nigerians will see one another as brothers and not as Northerner, Southerner, Easterner or Westerner. Travelling by road shall be fun again as the fear of being attacked by robbers, kidnappers and ritualists shall be a thing of the past.

Conclusion

Nigeria base theory is the way forward for the nation to achieve

peace and be on the move again. Efforts should be made for the nation to get out of the current situation she is in. Theories should be propounded to help eradicate the problems of terrorism and other vices plaguing the nation. All hands must be on deck to achieve it, as Hamid (2022) pointed that every Nigerian must join the government to find a solution to the present situation. If it works out it will be for the good of everyone in the country especially Nigerians. A Nigeria base theory is possible and the government, intellectuals and well-meaning citizens can bring it to pass.

Way Forward

The Federal Ministry of Education should set up a fact-finding committee to dig deep to find out other reasons why Social Studies is not living up to expectation. This committee should be constituted with seasoned educationalists who have a proven record of integrity. The government through the ministry of education should set up a committee of seasoned educationists with the sole task of coming up with theories that will better explain this country, theories that shall move this nation forward. One advice to the committee when set up should be that they call for contributions from all parts of the country, giving them the terms of reference and from the inputs obtained, the committee should filter out the ones that do not speak to the Nigerian nation but give us working theory that will move this nation forward. Theories sometimes become obsolete and the need to formulate another arises, sometimes they need to be improved on. So, another suggestion is, the workable theories that we are expecting to get should every now and then be subjected to review, to ascertain if it needs to be improved upon based on events at the time, or if it needs to be reformulated.

In as much as we are faulting the colonial curriculum, we should not be biased against them. Rather we should see the one that is suitable for our environment that has a universal appeal. Same goes for theory formulation. Theories that are relevant to Social Studies that will help in getting it working can be adopted to teach our children. For instance, there is this sociological theory 'functionalism.' Which states that the society is made up of different parts with each

part performing a specific or set of functions for the benefit of the whole society. That when any part is malfunctioning it affects the other parts who come together to arrest the malfunction. It sees the society as the human body, where for instance when the leg is affected, it affects the other parts of the body and the body will remain uncomfortable till the leg is nursed to health again. Nigeria will work again.

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