

RETHINKING CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A PATH WAY FOR SUSTAINING SECURITY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Nigeria is witnessing a prevailing lack of national consciousness that can best be described as a “breeding ground” for national insecurity and under-development in the 21st century. Citizenship education which is a viable tool that trains the mind of the citizen towards national consciousness is narrowed down to merely an implicit subject that ends within certain level of education or to a mere transmission of knowledge. Therefore, it can be said that citizenship education when properly imparted into citizens, can be transformed into an agent of promotional development. It is the position of this paper that the following can be adopted to reinvigorate citizenship education: citizenship education through conscientization

of the citizens, deployment of the social media/mass media, effective communication and inclusion of citizenship education at all levels of education. The study employed content analysis method (desk study) which is concerned with the review and critique of relevant literature. The study recommended that Nigerian citizenship education should be reinforced to give the citizens at all levels the ingredients that will positively reconstruct their minds and equip them to co-exist as an integral entity.

Keywords: Revitalizing, Citizenship, Education, Security, National, Development.

Introduction

In the world today, the complexities and myriads of problems ranging from high rate of cyber-crime, terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, ethnic and religious crises, drug trafficking, human trafficking, political upheavals and electoral fraud are on the increase. This makes Citizenship Education very imperative in addressing some of the noticeable abnormalities. Without mincing words, citizens need to be educated and well informed about the activities of government, the rights they have and the responsibilities or duties required of them. Both the state and the citizens are expected to fulfill their part of the social contract.

To empower and involve everyone in the process of safeguarding the country's stability and encouraging change, there is need to gear everyone's thoughts and imaginations accordingly through citizenship education. Hence according to Aibangbe (2006), there is no better time to talk about citizenship education than now in Nigeria when our nation appears to be at the brink of collapse. Interestingly, Ozigi and Canham (1979) as cited by Elias O. Aruma posit that development can take place in a society where citizens are well educated and fully provided with the necessary tools to use in solving

many problems that face the people, which will in turn enhance meaningful change and development. This means that the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills, and their subsequent application are essential in solving national problems and promoting sustainable national development in a country like Nigeria.

The simple road map to achieve refocused education for relevance is to evolve a deliberate educational policy and reforms for sustainable national development. In the same vein, Daniel Levine and Linda S. Bishai (2010) state that citizenship education seeks to give citizens the understanding and the habit of engaging in such a non-violent contest to participate constructively in politics, and more broadly in civic life and service to the community. This means that with such education, citizens become aware of the need to positively contribute in the process of security in terms of non-violent approach. At the same time, they are empowered to ensure that they serve as agents of development anywhere they find themselves.

It is quite glaring that the dispositions that ensure security and development are not inherited. They are fostered and inculcated by word and careful study, and also by the power of examples. The task of doing this is wholesome. School, government, parents, media, and private associations are an integral part of this. The school, however, bears a special responsibility for inculcating ethos and values for the development of responsible citizens who can contribute meaningfully to the sustenance of security and national development of

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the country. In Nigeria today, citizenship education is occasionally emphasized as merely an implicit subject that ends within certain level of education, and there seems to be an obvious little effort to inculcate the very essence of the vitality of it to birth responsible citizens. The support for citizenship education has been back and forth. There is no consistency. What passes as citizenship education has been characterized more by emphasis on mere transmission of knowledge through school values and direct delivery through subject teaching. Its intention to mould character and behaviour is rather too docile and deficient, because it has only helped in producing citizens in whom its transformational impact is clearly opaque. This paper focuses on the discussion of the relevance of citizenship education and how it can be revitalized to sustain security and promote national development.

Conceptual Clarification

Citizenship education has been conceptualized as a viable tool that educates and trains the mind of an individual towards national consciousness for a stable and enduring society. In this context, Ogunkeye (2012) as cited in Koyode defines citizenship education as the education given to young people with the aim to make them grow and develop into responsible citizens who know and understand their rights, duties and obligations, which will make them participate actively in the growth and development of the society, nation or country. The 21st century Nigerian democratic dispensation needs active, informed and responsible citizens who are willing and able to take responsibility for themselves and their communities to strategise security architecture for national development. Okwenu and Anyacho (2005) see citizenship education as the type of education the individuals in the state receive for the positive development of ideas, beliefs, habits and attitudes cherished by the society to enable them live as useful and effective members of the society. Osakwe and Itejere (1993) as cited in Yusuf et al. state that citizenship education is a system for the acquisition and internalization of the values, sentiment, and norms of society in which youth live so they can actually get involved to ensure that the common good of the citizens is catered for, including resisting anti-social and unguided youthful exuberance. Also, Abisala (2004) cited in Balogun and Yusuf posits that citizenship education is a body of knowledge which provides information and learning experience to equip and empower citizens to participate in democratic process. Citizenship education inculcates habits of value and the

usefulness of an individual to security and national development.

Butts (1993) defines citizenship education as explicit and continuing study of the basic concepts and values underlying our democratic political community and constitutional order. It emphasizes obedience and respect for governing authority and helps operationalize the principles and practice of good governance. The objectives of citizenship education from the Nigerian context are as follows:

- i. Leading young people to develop fundamental and democratic values that are necessary for sustenance of the society as an integral entity.
- ii. Helping the learners to develop civic and democratic behavior which will help them to become effective adult citizens in society. This will equip them to contribute to national security and development.
- iii. Helping the learners to know their duties, obligations and responsibilities as citizens.
- iv. Highlighting the structure of government, its functions and the responsibilities of government to the people and vice-versa.
- v. Sensitizing Nigerians on the functions and obligations of government.

A citizenry that is fully integrated with all these virtues will surely make a good society, thus promoting security and sustaining development. Citizenship education is a potent instrument for breeding citizens who would constitute the basis for effective security and national development. Ineffective implementation of citizenship education has been noted to have threatened the existence of society as an integral entity.

Citizenship Education and National Security

New security threats have made concerned scholars to ponder upon the revitalization of citizenship education in our learning institutions and public places. One of the key issues is premised on the fact that current citizenship education is inadequate, poorly implemented and targeted on few individuals. Education and security can influence each other positively or negatively depending on the context. This is necessarily so because education enables an individual, group, countries and the human race to explore, appreciate, understand and develop their physical and social environments for the satisfaction of their needs. Citizenship education is the subject and discipline that often accommodates curricula enrichments that conveniently deal with contemporary societal issues. It convinces the citizens that living a life of virtue is more fulfilling than a life of vice.

It is pointless to talk of security in the absence of the right type of proper education. In Nigeria, much has been done by increased security votes that are lavished on the states' security formations whose focus is often physical combat and realistic preparedness to counter the menace of non-state armed groups or criminals in the country. It should be noted that various incidents of internal security breaches in Nigeria have exposed poor educational system. The coercive approach in tackling insurgency, banditry, herders-farmer conflicts, kidnapping and other acts of criminality is a manifestation of lack of national consciousness. Olugbeko and Asagha (2014) note that national security is wider than military, defence or law enforcement. They point out other rather basic dimensions like education, employment and food security. Therefore, national security policy would be of no use to the uneducated, unemployed and hungry citizens that constitute the majority of the population. The educated citizen is worth in character and in learning, thus, national security policy is assured optimally.

In this 21st century, Nigerian security is under threat. Citizenship education which educates the citizens can play a greater role in changing a perverse mind from a conflict mindset to a conflict-resolution orientation, and from being war-minded to being a peacemaker. This will foster the much-needed unity for the survival of the nation. For Nigeria to achieve national security, every citizen must acquire and demonstrate national consciousness or civic values. As the former Secretary of State of the United States of America posits, quality education of a nation is a direct national function of a country's national security. The need for citizenship education is greater now in Nigeria than ever before, especially with rampant ethno-religious crises, communal conflicts, kidnapping, herders-farmers clashes and agitations for secession.

Anumba (2013) notes that citizens are role players in the society, but without concrete and effective socialization, they lack the capacity to effectively function productively as members. A right type of citizenship education to a member of a country makes him to be tolerant of other people's religion, belief, culture and limitations. It also promotes social harmony and security. Most of the conflicts in Nigeria often arise from ignorance and manipulations of religious fundamentalists, ethnic rivalry and overzealous politics. Therefore, citizenship education, when well imparted and utilized, has the potential of promoting national security. It suffices to say that lack of education itself is insecurity.

In an interview granted to the Daily Sun national daily in 2013, professor of Curriculum Development and former Minister of Education Ragayyatu Rufai advocated for a total reform of the education system as a means for curbing the rising spate of insecurity confronting Nigeria in the 21st century. These reforms include citizenship education that inculcates national consciousness, thus breeding citizens who would constitute the basis for effective national security. National security in the 21st century could be said to be closely linked with human capital, and the human capital of a nation could be said to be as strong or as weak as its educational system.

The Nexus between Citizenship Education and National Development

It will be foolhardy to wish for a meaningful development in a country without considering the place of education; not any kind of education but civic education. The quality of civic education in a country to a large extent determines the civility and the level of development that is possible in that country. A proper education of citizens on their civic responsibilities is a sure way to development. Dahal (2010) notes that citizenship education consolidates social fabrics and galvanizes relations of people with one another and for a common cause. Citizenship education instills into an individual or citizen positive values that will make him or her become sensible and a disciplined member of their communities. With these virtues, Nigerian citizens will ultimately promote national development.

According to Oyetade and Olaniran (2013), citizens with civic education improve in knowledge and attitudes when compared to those that are not exposed to civic programme. This indicates that citizenship education has the potential of transforming an individual to become an agent of national development. All these point to the fact that responsible citizenship is the hallmark of every promising society. Indeed, it is a basic requirement for sustainable national development and nationhood. Meziobi, et.al (2009) hold that citizenship education is a planned effort made to confer on individuals from the state certain knowledge, facts, capacities, societal qualities and standards, and disposition that are important for an active and helpful life in building a dynamic and strong country. In Nigeria, the attention given to citizenship education in our schools is poor, because it is treated as a subject that is inferior to others. This is in view of the time allocated to it within the educational institutions. This partly explains the reason for the political apathy and low interest in nation building.

Therefore, it can be said that citizenship education when properly imparted to citizens can lead to transformational development, and not an agent of destruction. Gathu (1998) as cited in Aruma confirms that there is an urgent need to build an informed citizenry so as to enable each individual member of the society to be very much concerned about the welfare of his/her neighbours and environment. This implicitly means that for Nigeria to witness national development, there is need to explore the place of citizenship education in birthing individuals who are concerned in contributing their quota towards the growth and development of Nigeria.

Mary (2010), stresses that citizenship education prepares an individual in contributing his quota to his immediate community. It helps in the development of a sense of national concern and obligation to protect and work for the good of Nigerian citizens and nation than for the good of one's self alone. It informs the individual about forces that have influenced developments in the political, social, economic and religious spheres, and how to utilize the combination of this knowledge in promoting the affairs of the country. Citizenship education helps to inculcate a sense of belonging. Freire (1985) notes that a person does not change his or her reality without first understanding it. Therefore, citizenship education is a vehicle that stimulates initiatives that will transform citizens into agents of sustainable security and national development in Nigeria. When the citizens in Nigeria are well informed with regard to their responsibility to the country, they will be willing and ready to contribute meaningfully to national development. Similarly, Andreas Brunold (2015) contends that to have knowledgeable citizens, the society must make concerted effort towards educating them, which is made possible with citizenship education.

Citizenship education helps in citizenship socialization which will support development. Lack of support for development in Nigeria is associated with the shallow knowledge of the essence of nation building among the citizens. Therefore, when citizenship education is properly internalized by Nigerian citizens, they will support national development. Knowledgeable citizenry brings about a more sustainable society in several ways. First, citizens through their daily activities support government policies related to resource management and civic conduct. Second, citizens can support measures related to sustainable development and politicians who introduce and support enlightened legislation. An informed citizenry can help communities and governments enact sustainability measures and move towards more sustainable societies.

Ways of Revitalizing Citizenship Education in Nigeria for Sustaining Security and National Development

Citizenship Education in Nigeria has not achieved its desired objectives of transforming and equipping Nigerians with the right type of attitudes, values, knowledge and skills needed to function appropriately in today's society. Whatever form of citizenship education that existed before now has not addressed the multifarious problems plaguing Nigeria, such as high rate of cyber-crime, terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, ethnic and religious crises, drug trafficking, human trafficking, political killings and electoral fraud. An anatomy of the Nigerian value system reveals that our value for human lives has deteriorated significantly. This probably explains the numerous cases of kidnapping, politically-motivated killings and corruption. In view of these, there is urgent need to reappraise citizenship education in Nigeria so that citizens will assume their roles in contributing to security and nation building. So, it is the position of this paper that the following can be adopted to reinvigorate citizenship education:

Citizenship Education through Conscientisation of the Citizens

The spirit of national unity and national consciousness should be promoted effectively among all Nigerians through citizenship education. This will certainly help them function well in the society. Aruma (1998) notes that it is not an easy thing to develop a new consciousness. Indeed, any change in the society requires good understanding of what is really involved. Paulo Freire (1985) states that a person does not change his or her reality without first understanding it. Therefore, working towards this very understanding should be one of the main engagements of citizenship education initiatives so as to stimulate sustainable security and national development in Nigeria.

Citizenship Education through Mass Media/Social Media

The role of social media/mass media can be seen as a strategy that can help in facilitating the revitalization of citizenship education for sustainable security and national development in Nigeria. People need information in order to form new attitudes, values and aspirations among other things. Gathu (1998) argues that there is an urgent need to build an informed citizenry so as to enable each individual member of the society to be very much concerned about the welfare of his/her neighbours and environment. Nnamene (2007) states that information is part of man's knowledge which empowers those who have it. Therefore, citizenship

education through the social media/mass media should focus on the rights to inform and to be informed in order to enable people to respond positively to a number of issues affecting them in the society.

Citizenship Education through Effective Communication

Citizenship education through effective communication is a good means of revitalizing citizenship education for sustainable security and national development. The need for effective communication to disseminate information on citizenship education cannot be overemphasized. Citizenship education, therefore, requires effective communication in order to be very successful in reaching the target audience in the society. Pratt and Boyden (1985:156) observe that every social development project involves communication between members of a community or group; development workers and the people among whom they work; funding agencies and field workers, and so on. Communication involves the sharing of ideas – of information, of emotions, of hopes and fears; and this is part of every human activity.

The implication of this is that communication is, indeed, very critical for the success of citizenship education as a social force that helps to shape the society with a view to promoting sustainable security and national development in Nigeria. The purpose of communication in citizenship education is to promote change which focuses on the interaction between the change agents and the people whom they are working with in their respective communities in the society. The people of a community can be enlightened about their obligations and rights, as well as how government works through adequate public enlightenment campaigns.

Inclusion of Citizenship Education at all Levels of Education

Citizenship education should be made a course at all the levels of education in Nigeria. For instance, a critical look at the course content of Citizenship Education for NCE students would reveal that the course has been designed to have all-round developed individuals who would be emotionally stable enough to adapt to the ever-changing world, and initiate good ideas that will enhance national growth and development.

Need for Broader Goals of Citizenship Education

Citizenship education as it stands is limited to deliver the expected goals in Nigeria. It is too narrow in its set goals. There is need to broaden its goals so that it can play a vital role in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable people to contribute to and benefit

from an inclusive and sustainable future where security and national development will be at the front burner in Nigeria. With broadened goals, citizens learn to form clear and purposeful goals, work with others with different perspectives, find untapped opportunities and identify multiple solutions to big societal problems. Citizenship education needs to be broadened beyond just preparing students and people to know their rights and obligations. There is a need for it to equip students with the skills they need to become active, responsible and engaged citizens. Citizenship education should consist of content education, service education and vocational technical education. According to Marshal (1999), content education should consist of traditional civics where students study history and the inner workings of the government. Service education requires that students participate in native learning where they serve the community, while vocational technical education should consist of skill acquisition, training and entrepreneurship.

Another major problem area that needs to be addressed by citizenship education is inter-ethnic misconceptions and the struggle for power. In Nigeria, there is lack of trust among the members of three major ethnic groups. The struggle for political power is always a do or die affair. Each ethnic group tries to outwit the other in a mad quest for power and superiority of one's ethnic group. This type of unhealthy rivalry must be addressed by citizenship education to avoid giving the youths a wrong impression that life is all about acquisition of economic and political power. The youth must be taught the virtues of hard work and earning honest living through work (Yinka, 2000). To this end, the curriculum of Citizenship Education must include the teaching of human rights, community service education, political participation, and attitude and value system.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The national woes and societal challenges of various shades working against the national security and development of Nigeria today are not unconnected with the phenomenon of lack of national consciousness occasioned by faulty educational system. The unending ethno-religious conflicts, terrorism, kidnapping, herders-farmers clashes and agitations for secession are manifestation of poor implementation of citizenship education. Citizenship education is much needed because of its great influence especially on security and national development.

Effective and relevant education for citizens should be compulsory for all and sundry particularly in the 21st century when things are not only falling apart, but are no

longer at ease with all the ethnic tribes and religious groups in Nigeria. As the society is dynamic and constantly changing and growing, the learning process must follow suit; otherwise, it becomes irrelevant. Citizenship education in Nigeria today is more of a school content subject aimed at inculcating national consciousness and attitude in the Nigerian students than to all her citizens. Therefore, citizenship education should be reinforced to give the citizens at all levels the ingredients that will reconstruct their minds positively to co-exist as an integral entity.

We cannot discuss revitalizing citizenship education without reappraising the teacher pedagogy to learner centeredness. Teachers are the most critical and expensive inputs of an educational system. The teacher is always at full control of what is to be learnt, how and when to learn. It is crucial that teachers of citizenship education receive specialized degrees and training in order to teach and play a role in citizenship education. They will only be able to teach citizenship if they themselves believe in the values of the subject matter. Furthermore, a multi-disciplinary approach and government publicity agency should be adopted for the study of citizenship education for all citizens. Also, it should be adopted as re-orientation for public office holders before and after assuming positions. The philosophy behind the endorsement in learning institutions and public places is to be measured in terms of their role in producing patriotic and reasoned citizens with sound judgment to effectively live, socialize and contribute positively to security and national development, among others.

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