

REAPPRAISING CIVIC EDUCATION/CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION FOR FUNCTIONALITY AND SELF RELIANCE

Babatunde Olaoye-Williams

Abstract

This paper is on re-appraising civic/citizenship education for functionality and self reliance. It points out the strict relationship between education and National development and affirms the extent to which instruction on civic /citizenship education can be more effective to enhance change to desirable behaviour, attitude, skills, knowledge and value acquisition. It highlights shortcomings attainment of objectives of Civic/Citizenship Education if National Development evident in the appalling level of ethical and moral issues, and under utilized human resources. The Civic/citizenship ideal is identified as realizable and realistic in the light of transforming such to self reliance and functionality through capacities for self reliant living, guarantee of popular participation in governance and ability of people to make decisions that affect their lives. It suggests a more practical approach, favorable policy shift, extension of civic/citizenship education by civil society to schools; mass enlightenment of the citizenry and enlightenment of security forces on civic/citizenship education.

Introduction

Re-appraising civic education/citizenship education for functionality and self reliance brings to mind the importance of civic /citizenship education in the annals of national development necessitating constant re-appraisal. It can be pointed out that education and National development cannot be separated as the demand of time and change is constant, also necessitating the need for curriculum re-appraisal. Olaoye-Williams (2003) explained that emphasis both in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the National Policy on education shows the premium as well as importance of

effective citizenship as vital spur in development drive. Of importance is the extent to which instruction in civic education and citizenship education can be more effective, and to enhance a positive permanent change not only in behaviour but also in attitudes, skills, knowledge and value acquisition.

This is where the issues of re-appraisal, functionality and self reliance come in. It also becomes more imperative to look at literature replete with accounts of shortcomings of attainment of objectives of civic education and citizenship education in all facets of national life. These shortcomings are inextricably tied to civic/citizenship education related failings in National development. For example, the level of ethical and moral issues in the Nigerian society today negate the view point of Okam (1998) on citizenship Education. He opined that citizenship education is intrinsically committed to ethical and moral issues, which enable any society to realize its set goals and objectives. It also places emphasis on individual and group responsibilities which are geared towards the achievement of socio-civic goals of the society.

In addition, contemporary Nigerian societal features largely contrast with Ezegbe's (1988) perspectives on citizenship education as education that teaches pupils their rights, privileges, duties and responsibilities as good citizens to enable them perform their duties as respectable and active members of a society. These

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Nigerian societal features also contrast with the view of Starkey (1992) on civic education, who perceives it as essential to enable students develop a sense of the common good, respect for the law and affection for the republic. It would also enable students to follow their own desire for freedom and justice and face responsibly the problems and challenges of their time.

Series of concerns underscore the claims of perceived shortcomings of citizenship education, like Soludo's (2007) concern on the appalling state of the country's education system, describing it as a time - bomb waiting to explode . Similarly, President Yar' Adua (2009) , on Nigeria's exclusion from G20 meeting in London, as quoted by Dapo Fafowora(The Nation, April 9(2009) admitted that despite Nigeria's huge natural and human resources , it had not yet achieved its true economic potential as a nation. While the Nigerian acting president was on a state visit to the United States in April 2010 , President Obama of the United States harped on Nigeria's leadership role in Africa as critical for the survival of the continent and suggested an urgent need to ensure free and fair elections and also to tackle the problem of corruption and establish security and stability in the country. (The Nation, Tuesday April 13, 2010 2).

Issues in the aforementioned make the matter of re-appraisal an imperative.

National Policy and Civic /Citizenship Education

Olaoye-Williams (2003) harped on civic responsibility provisions in the Nigerian constitution as well as the National Policy on Education .A typical example is the National Policy on Education (2004), section 1 (7), on educational aims and objectives to which the philosophy is linked include:

1. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity

2. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society
3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and
4. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

While relevance of civic education/citizenship education in the 1999 Nigeria constitution to Olaoye –Williams (2003) include:

Chapter II (13) Fundamental obligation of Government

Chapter II (14) The Government and the People :

Chapter II (15) Political objectives

Chapter II (16) Economic objective

Chapter II (17) Social objectives

Chapter II (18) Educational objectives

Chapter II (19) Foreign policy objectives

Chapter II (20) Environmental objectives

Chapter II (21) Directive on Nigerian culture

Chapter II (22) Obligation of the Mass Media

Chapter II (23) National Ethics

Chapter II (24) Duties of the citizen

Provisions in the Nigerian constitution and the National Policy on Education on Civic Education/Citizenship education related issues underscore the importance of civic education and citizenship education. Enlightened citizens and a participant political culture are vital ingredient in national development drive.

Functionality and Self Reliance (Conceptual Clarity)

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1993) defines 'function' as, 'made for or concerned with

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practical use and working properly', while the Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1991) looks at 'function' as, "the action for which a person or thing is especially fitted or used, or for which a thing exists. It sees functional as, to contribute to the development or maintenance of a larger whole.

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1993) also sees 'self reliance' as "able to act without depending on the help of others". While Webster's Dictionary (1991) sees 'self reliance' as 'having confidence in and exercising one's own powers or judgment'.

From the above, it is the view point of this paper that general self reliance of the citizenry dovetails into national self-reliance. The issue of self reliance is also intricately tied to human development in a country.

Functionality and Self Reliance Through Civic /Citizenship Education

The importance of civic / citizenship education was earlier pointed out with the imperativeness of the extent to which instruction in civic/ citizenship education can be effective. Watchwords in citizenship / civic education objectives will provide a fundamental base in enhancing functionality and self reliance. Such watchwords can be summarized as:

- i. Positive change in attitudes, skills, knowledge and value acquisition.
- ii. Knowledge of rights, privileges, duties and responsibilities as good citizens.
- iii. Development of sense of common good and respect for the law.
- iv. Development of ideas of justice, freedom, and fair play

The question is: how does this ideal transform to self reliance, functionality and National development? First is the area of necessity of development of human potential in a

country. A reference point is Soludo's (2006) thesis that :

For Nigeria, its youthful population provides the potential of a sound bridge to the future with the right education for all the citizens, the large and expanding youthful population could provide the continuing growth dynamite and even export labor to the aging western world.'

A watchword in the understanding is the viewpoint of Adedeji (1989), cited in Onimode (2004) cornerstones of development fundamental principles, which include self reliance (national and collective) -self sustainment, democracy and sustainable human development.

The standpoint of this paper on functionality and self reliance through civic /citizenship education is in the area of people- centred democracy through a popular participation in governance. It is of the view that functionality and self-reliance is tied to sustainable development, and subscribes to the viewpoint of Onimode (2004) that:

Sustainable development is development that not only generates economic growth but also distributes equitably, that regenerates the environment rather than destroying it; that empowers people rather than marginalizing them. It is development that gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities and providing for their participation in decisions that direct their lives.

Similarly, Speth (1994) avered that sustainable development is development that is pro-people, pro-nature, pro-jobs and pro-women related. This paper subscribes to the relatedness of sustainable development, self-reliance and functionality.

Self –Reliance and Functionality (Challenges)

Reappraising civic /citizenship education for functionality and self reliance is on the extent to which capacities for self reliant living is enhanced; guarantee of popular participation in governance; ability of people to make decisions that affect their lives.

The above look simple but enormous. Achieving new milestones in civic / citizenship education demands a new approach to classroom methods such as the need for emphasis more on 'doing' and on examples rather than precepts. Vital is the need to reach out to larger audience in the society. Value education should also be an integral part to enhance functionality and self reliance

There again, is the extent to which policy formulation can be changed favourably towards a mass- oriented enlightenment programme. A major challenge is the attitudinal disposition of the people, which is presently rather lukewarm, coupled with the high level of illiteracy in the society together with the culture of superstition and fatalism.

Suggestions to Move forward

It must be pointed out that the major focus of civic /citizenship education for functionality and self- reliance must be on improving the ability of people to make decisions that affect their lives positively. A similar viewpoint is that by Onimode (2004) of "a deep seated culture of popular participation, empowerment of the people and their organization to involve themselves in creating structures and in designing policies and programmes that serve the interest of all and contribute optimally to the development process. The above will not be possible without an interest-base enhanced by civic /citizenship education. Achieving this is tied to the following:

1. Civic /citizenship education should be more practical and less theoretical
2. Civic/citizenship education should include capacities for self reliant living.

3. Favourable policy shift to encourage civic and citizenship education is very vital.
4. Civil societies should extend civic /citizenship education to schools in form of seminars and symposiums
5. Enlightenment programmes for student unions on civic/citizenship education is also important.
6. Mass enlightenment of the citizenry is also the watchword.
7. Security forces should also be enlightened on civic/citizenship education.

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- Babatunde Olaoye-Williams
Social Studies Department,
College of Education,
Warri (Delta State).***