

FUNCTIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT GENERATION: STRATEGIES FOR CHANGING EBIRA COMMUNITY

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Abstract

Every society strives towards the provision of functional education for its citizens, because of the realization that education is necessary to engineer and consolidate any societal developmental process. However achieving quality and functional education would be a mirage if poverty steer the people on the face as a result of unemployment. This paper takes into account functional citizenship education and employment generation, their place in changing the outlook of Ebira community. While doing this, the paper mirrors the social maladies prevalent in the Ebira community such as youth restiveness, armed robbery and kidnapping. The paper submits by putting forward a number of recommendations: Making citizenship education more functional, creating more jobs and to re-orientate the community to shun social vices that were hitherto unknown in the society are among such recommendations.

Keywords: Functional, Citizenship education, employment generation, social maladies, Ebira community.

Citizenship education, like most social science concepts defies a universally acceptable definition. However many scholars assert that the concept denotes the training process whereby the citizens are kept abreast of their political roles in the society. Soja, Innocent and Paul (2014), opined that it is an educational process, formal

or informal, through which the citizens get acquainted with the basic requirements of good citizenship. Citizenship education can further be seen as a way of life for the nation. It is an education which offers an ideal opportunity to examine, clarify and isolate the need, the assets and problems of the society. Through proper development, implementation and utilization of the knowledge, citizenship education offers the society, right environment to inculcate in the life of the learner, compared to what should be obtainable in the application of this concept (Dibal and Usman, 2011).

With rapid population growth in Nigeria, unemployment has since become major issue of concern to successive government in Nigeria since 1960s. The negative effects of unemployment on Nigerian economy cannot be overemphasized. It results in non-utilization of resources leading to low productivity. It is also a major cause of rural-urban drift which has led to the congestion problem in urban centres with its attendant problems such as urban unemployment, destitution and high rate of criminal activities among other problems (Onwuemele, 2013). Unemployment is a serious impediment to social progress. Apart from representing a colossal waste of a country's manpower resources, it generates welfare loss in terms of lower output thereby leading to lower income and wellbeing. In the light of the above, successive governments in Nigeria have made several attempts to solve social menace. One of the major strategies was the mainstreaming of employment creation programme and policies into the National Development Planning.

Ebiraland otherwise known as Central Senatorial District of Kogi State will for the sake of this paper be referred to as Ebira community. The land is naturally endowed with both human and material resources in all its 5 local government areas of Ajaokuta (14 wards), Adavi (11 wards), Okehi (11 wards), Okene (14 wards) and Ogori-Magongo (11 wards) (Ohidah, 2008). Ebira community inhabit an area of about 3,426 sq.km. South of Oweland, West of the Niger and North of the present Edo sTate of Nigeria. Ebira community plays host to settler-communities such as Ogori and Magongo who are of Yoruba stock and Igala, Bassa and Nupe immigrants at Utenyi (Ajaokuta). It graduated from a district in Kabba Division of Ilorin Province to its present status of a senatorial district with 5 local government areas (Salami, 2011; Audu, 2010).

According to the 1963 national census, Ebira community had a population of 325,273. By the 1991 national headcount, the population stood at 722,023. This increase is accounted for, in part, by the large influx of people occasioned by the take-off of the Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Project and the Iron Ore Mining Company, Itakpe in 1980. Considering the down-stream activities associated with these projects and the commercial-giant-status Okene has assumed, the population has grown even more astronomically by the beginning of the new millennium. According to Salami (2011), the provisional population figure of the 2006 national census stands at 928,655 distributed as follows: Adavi LGA 217,219 (representing 23.39%), Ajaokuta LGA 122,432 (representing 13.18%), Ogori-Mgongo LGA 39,807 (which represents 4.29%),

Okehi LGA 223,574 (accounting for 24.08%) and Okene LGA 325,623 (put at 35.06%). This figure represents a population increase of only 206,632 (28.62%) over and above the 1991 population of the area (a period of 15 years)! This was rejected by the people and is being contested through all legitimate channels (Ohidah, 2008, Segun and Oni, 2010). This paper in effect seeks to see who functional citizenship education and employment generation can be used to change Ebira community that is now bedeviled by social menace and economic downturn.

Functional Citizenship Education

The essence of citizenship education in the Nigerian setting was to set afoot a man with functional skills that will help him live peacefully among others and contribute his quota to overall development of himself and his community. Mbakwe (2015) opines that society need to accord priority to the inculcation of values fo social responsibility, political participation, job orientation and spiritual and moral uprightness in the citizens. The achievement fo individuals was largely determined by how well he put into practical application the value systems mentioned above. Ozigi and Ocho (1981) gave credence to the above viewpoint when they asserted thus:

There was a traditional form of education which had existed in our own societies, as in other societies, for centuries. This type of education, formally and informally imbibed a lot of cultural values, norms, traditions, and belief system of societies on our children and these had helped them to know how to produce things needed for the wellbeing of the society pp. 61

By functional citizenship education in Nigeria, the researchers mean that education is life-long in nature as it aims at equipping individuals with the necessary skills and attitude that would help them function effectively in the society. The system which tallies with the traditional education as informed by Ozigi and Ocho (1981) has vocational skills, which are needed for the survival of the society. Every responsible member of the community serves as a transmitter-teacher and trainer of the societal norms and skills to the younger generations. They are looked upon as models of good virtues to be emulated by the young ones.

In Nigerian societies, the ultimate purpose of citizenship education was tied to the fact that the child is of supreme value: for the settlement, he is the perpetuation of the group, for the family, he is wealthy, and for the woman, he is the means of social recognition. Education in this wise comprises instructions in technique and knowledge to be acquired. Education is completed when he acquires sociability, self awareness in relations to himself, his fellows, to the family, to the community; his duties to self, others, family and entire community (Mbakwe, 2015).

In many Nigerian societies, there are no distinct institutions with specific duty of improving education. Rather the institution should be congruent. For instance, the family should at the same time be economic, political, religious and educational unit.

Citizenship education is therefore a potent social institution through which norms, values, morals and even vocations could be transmitted from one generation to another. Whether formal or not, the system won't lose its essence as education which generally constitutes a social institution created and maintained by the society, in order to perpetuate certain aspects of its culture through purposeful, teaching and learning (Mbakwe, 2015).

Functional citizenship education should be that which encourage theory and practice so that stage by stage a procedure exists for revisit. For the mere fact that people are educated to fend for themselves should eradicate unemployment in the society. For citizenship education to be very functional, it should be a daily occurrence and largely predicated on environmental challenges and societal needs which are geared towards productivity and self-relevance.

Social Maladies in Ebira Community

The unemployment challenge in Ebira community (though a nationwide phenomenon) has dire consequences not just with the family setting but the entire community as can be seen today.

The family set up in Ebira community is presently fraught with many loose ends. The cherished Ebira values system has greatly nose-dived and the centre can no longer hold. Violence, prostitution, easy virtues, bootlicking, sycophancy, armed robbery, ritual killings, pick pocketing, house burglary and so many other vices that now permeate Ebira society. Poverty and idleness are now common sights in a society of high unemployment which of course provide fertile recruitment ground for political thugs and other miscreants used by politicians to intimidate, harass and physically assault political opponents. The proliferation of arms in Kogi Central gives impetus to these miscreants to unleash mayhem on themselves and innocent people in what the people now call "Attack".

Ebira cultural festivals hitherto peaceful and entertaining have been taken over by hoodlums, they are not only debased, adulterated but bastardized. They have been turned into what Suleiman (2007) calls cultural nuisance. They now serve as avenues to settle scores between one gang or club and another. In spite of government's clampdown on such celebration, these boys defy the orders and go ahead to "celebrate" the festivals that would always end up in bloody clashes. In the time past, the elders were custodians of wisdom and culture. Today, our youths warn their parents to stay indoors as they want to celebrate cultural festivals.

The frequent violence and other social vices wrought on Ebira community cannot be said to be a heart-cheering one for an average Ebira person. The image of Ebira community and its people have been battered beyond repairs. A non-Ebira is weary of an average Ebira man whom he sees as vandalistic and violent. This has accounted for the denial of job placement for Ebira indigenes in so many places.

The aesthetic value of Ebiraland, which caused former Governor Audu to refer to it as “small London” is a beast gone. Magnificent buildings, ancient buildings and some Ebira antiquities have been lost to inferno-stirred by miscreants. At the slightest misunderstanding for which dialogue would have resolved, the beautiful edifices which make the site of Ebira Community to behold were usually the first target of attack.

No investor in his right mind goes to a place where there is no peace to have business investment there. If no business investment, there would be no employment and development will certainly be a dream away.

Sadly, in Ebira community, today, the fear of thugs is the beginning of wisdom. Unfortunately these miscreants go by dignified names as “Advisers on Security Matters” who unleash this reign of terror are seen by the upcoming young ones as role models. These young ones do not answers great names like Abdulmalik Attah, Raji Abdullah, Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ahmadu Bello, Aminu Kano, Nelson Mandela but meaningless names like Skido, Kasta, Egidi, Unava, Aduvusu etc with which the thugs are known. The picture painted above is the handiwork of unemployment which the budding youth found themselves in.

Changing Ebira Community through Employment Generation

The task of creating employment requires all hands to be on deck; it necessitates the collaboration of all stakeholders. Government must diversify the economy and resuscitate the neglected sectors of the economy, especially the agricultural sector. It must boost economic activities by raising capital expenditure substantially. When well equipped, schools, roads, bridges, water system, housing, healthcare, securities, electricity networks and other projects that facilitate job creation are embarked upon, the ease of doing business would be greatly enhanced. This is what Abiola (2006) called the conferral of social benefit technique of governance.

Concerted efforts should also be made to reform the various agencies involved in creating employment and alleviating poverty. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN) and the Bank of Industry should step up their works and generate sustainable employment.

The individuals or ordinary citizen also has a role to play in this. One should strive and encourage others to acquire the necessary business acumen needed to chant a pathway to economic buoyancy. The acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in carpentry, tailoring, painting, plumbing etc. should be embraced. This is the approach which greatly alleviated the Niger Delta uprising under the amnesty scheme.

Each person has an innate, unique set of talent and super abilities which he can monetize with ease. Some are creative writers, others are orators, some enjoy bead making, others fancy stage decoration, private teaching, phone or computer repairs, printing, hand-made cards, web designing, radio presentation etc. For one to discover

his specific potentials, he must know himself what it is that he is gifted in, he lives and enjoys doing at all times, whether or not he is paid for it.

One who takes pleasure in scribing words on paper and assembling them into literary gems would make a proficient writer. He needs to be encouraged and enlightened that he could work as a freelance writer for national and international media bodies, become a published author or organizing writer workshops and make the participants pay a modest gate fee. One who always sees grammatical blunder everywhere he goes would make a great editor and he could get paid helping others edit their projects, seminar papers, CVS and other manuscripts.

Many of us take for granted skills like computer software development, website designing, radio presentation, tutoring etc. are all extremely veritable sources of income.

Conclusion

Citizenship education is the process whereby citizens develop the values, attitudes, beliefs and opinion that enable them to relate to and function within the political system. This paper attempted to make case for its functionality and most importantly argues that generation of employment would reduce the social maladies that are prevalent in Ebira Community presently. In achieving this, the government at the centre, state and local government levels have parts to play. The efforts will not be limited to the government alone, the community and the youth have prominent roles to play if success must be attained.

Recommendations

Functional citizenship education and access to it by the young ones of Ebira community will minimize ignorance and prejudices that foster inter-group violence or politicians manipulation of the groups for their selfish interests. The government need serious reconsideration of educational policy, better facilities and better environment for imparting knowledge.

There is the need for Ebira community reorientation where hardwork is rewarded and crime punished. The youths must be made to believe in Ebira project and they must be placed at the front burner in the quest for all round development in the area. To do otherwise is certainly to beg the issue.

No society or nation becomes great by the number of politicians jostling for political offices or the number of times its constitution is amended in a quarter. The greatness of any nation is in the quality of its people which is the worth of its governance and in the empowerment of its youth. Indeed, the future of Ebira community and its development depends on how we develop, empower and inspire the youths.

The social upheaval wrought on the land and the general youth restiveness was as a result of disconnect that still threatens the social cohesion of the common destiny

of the Ebira community. These youths were driven by the imperativeness of survival to do what they did and are still doing. In order to empower and liberate them and in this process, ensure peace and development, the government must consider a back-to-school campaign.

The high rates of unemployment must be addressed through effective, efficient and sustainable programmes, including promotion of small and medium scale enterprises and industrial development. The Ebira youth must be enlightened that the more they carry on the senseless violence, the more investors distance themselves from the community. The ones already here might start having a rethink and this will forth or worsen the unemployment and poverty rate of the land. Such a situation creates steady pool of recruits for violence.

The face and content of politics must change. While vote is fundamental, what is more fundamental is the sovereignty of the people over all other powers. The people must be empowered to hold their leaders accountable. They must also be able to exercise freely the power of recall. Of course we cannot empower the youth without empowering the people, it would be defective, a powerless people cannot empower its youths.

To reach out to the Ebira youth for reformation, aside from utilizing two important platforms – the local musicians and the masquerades (of both day and night), the Tao FM and Otite Radio must be exploited to reach out to the teeming youth. No amount of lectures, symposia or workshops can bring to the organizers but the two radio stations can invade their privacy.

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