

# ETHICAL VALUES AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: THE CRUX OF SOCIAL STUDIES

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## **Abstract**

Education is said to be the process through which human potentialities are nurtured and guided for self actualization and accomplishment. It is the totality of knowledge and skills acquired by man to enable him live and interact meaningfully in the society. It is in the light of this that this paper takes a cursory look at the concept and objectives of citizenship education in relation to national ethics and values. Essential qualities of a functional citizen are discussed. The place of social studies education in enhancing effective citizenship education is highlighted.

## **Introduction**

Ethics and values are necessary to the making of effective and responsible citizenry. The norms and values of any society are most manifested in the behavioral patterns of its citizens. The inclusion of citizenship education in the curricular, therefore, avails the learners the opportunity to acquire the knowledge as well as skills with which they can function responsively and effectively in their day to day interaction with others within and outside their immediate environment.

Social Studies was introduced into the school curricular as an attitudinal engineering process to essentially resolve some social problems that were threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria in the late and early seventies. Social Studies attempts to study the society and properly understand it in order to produce effective citizens. In other words, it is an area of study which a society uses to inculcate in the learners the knowledge, skills and attitudes and values that are considered valuable in interpersonal relationship among peoples of the world.

## **The Concept of Ethics and Values**

The International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences (Sills 1968), conceptualizes ethics as standard conducts among people in a social group. According to Dauda (2000), ethics are the established code of conduct, the moral principles or moral philosophy governing the behavioural tendencies and social interaction of the members of the group concerned. Perceiving ethics from management point of view, Bambale (2003), described it as an area of study that is concerned with how decisions affect other people's rights and duties, the moral rules that people apply in decision making and the nature of the relationship among people.

Ethical system is an institutional process that encourages the spread of anything that is perceived to be humanly good, morally excellent and will invariably be progressively beneficial to mankind. Succinctly put, ethic is concerned with the study of values in the realm of human conduct.

Values are beliefs, as well as specific behavioural patterns that are personally and socially preferred and accepted in the society. According to Adedoyin (1994). Values are determining factors in the way people do things and what they consider best and choose from the available alternatives. He further stated that values are essential ingredients in the attainment of functional altruistic citizenry. Reviewing Nigeria's societal values, Akinpelu (1983), identified six components of values. These are moral, spiritual, economic, political, aesthetic and social values. These components, according to him are interactively ingrained and reflective in the individuals personality, Mezieobi (1992), perceived values as people's socially or culturally acquired perception of what is desirable or not, which ultimately influences their choice and behaviour. Consequently, Amadi (1986), in Mezieobi (1992:96-97), classified values into three as follows:

- > Self-oriented values: These deal with the love of intellectual virtues, preservation of life and development of desirable attitudes such as honesty, integrity, self respect, self actualization, etc.
- > Societal values refer to commitment of individuals to social improvement, concern for the welfare of others as well as service to humanity, accountability, probity and tolerance.
- > Aesthetic values are feelings of appreciation and preservation of beauty, harmony and the artistic creations including arts, music and literature. Values are indeed an integral part of human personality. They in fact mirror the uniqueness of humans.

## **Citizenship and Citizenship Education**

Citizenship is a relative term which is perceived, in different ways by different people. Citizenship, according to Lar (1999), is a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between a citizen and his country. Citizenship in general and in the Nigerian concept according to Mezieobi (1992:81), connotes:

- Membership of a sovereign State or its division;
- Enjoyment of all available rights such as political, civic and legal;
- Participation in the performance of certain duties and obligations to the body politics;
- Functional or productive citizens;
- National pride and identify.

Citizenship simply refers to the position or status conferred on an individual by the constitution of his country. He/she has certain rights and privileges as enshrined in the constitution while he/she has certain mandatory responsibilities toward the state.

Citizenship education is defined by Ezegebe,(1988), in Mezieobi (1992:93), as "that education through which pupils in the school system will be taught about their rights, privileges, duties, and responsibilities as good citizens and through which they will be encouraged to perform their duties, and play positive and active role in the society".

In the same vein, Mezieobi (1992:93), refers to citizenship education as "the educative means in sovereign state whereby the citizens or individuals become socially and politically aware, socially integrated into the social skills and competencies, become socially sensitive and actively participate in their social responsibility .for maximum productivity and development". According to him, aims of citizenship education among others include the creation of social awareness, social sensitivity, social relevance pursuit and social integration. Others are social serviceability, active participation and productive societal contribution.

Okam (1998:37), identified the following essential ingredients of a worthwhile citizenship programme;

- Issues concerning the social system of human roles and role behaviours.
- Matters that deal with cultural system of norms of human behaviour and or customs including the behavioural system of the mind in interaction with the physical and social environment;
- Problems and affairs that pertain to the political systems of social control and power allocation as well as issues that deal with the economic systems of production, distribution and consumption of goods and services, and
- Problems and issues which impinge on the eco-system of the elements of space and earth which humans need and use.

In the context of this paper, citizenship education is conceived as the practical use or manifestation of the knowledge and skills acquired through value orientation process in both formal and informal settings in our day to day interpersonal relationship with others,

### **Objectives of Citizenship Education**

Citizenship education is aimed at preparing the citizens to face the challenges of life within and outside their country. It has among others the following objectives:

- To promote intellectual and manipulative skills necessary for professional and vocational function in the environment.
- To develop critical thinking and rational decision making abilities.
- To develop in the learners the ability to analyse societal controversial contemporary issues and problems.
- To inculcate desirable attitudes and values in the citizens.
- To produce ethically sound, humanistic, efficient and effective citizens that would manage the future affairs of the society.

### **Categories and Essential Qualifies of a Good Citizen**

Lar ( 1999:21), categorized citizens of a country into three, namely;

- The good or active citizen
- The bad citizen
- The passive citizen

Ideally, a good and effective citizen should be morally sound with amiable personality. Mezieobi (1992:90-91), Fadeye (1995) and Ogunjemilu (2006:459), identify the following as essential qualities of a functional citizen: Obedience: Citizens are expected to abide by the laws of the land.

- Loyalty: They are to be loyal to the country and the constituted authority.

- Voting: It is the duty or responsibility of citizens to vote or be voted for during elections.
- Payment of taxes and rates: Citizens are expected to pay their taxes and rates such as water, electricity, etc to boost government revenue.
- Assisting law enforcement Agents: To report criminals to the police or law-enforcement agents.
- They should respect public property and take adequate care of them.
- Patriotism: Citizens should be ready at any time the situation demands to defend the integrity and sovereignty of their country against any form of attack.
- They should respect the dignity of other citizens.
- They should be proud of their country and portray good image of their country in the international arena.

### **The Role of Social Studies in Enhancing or Producing Effective Citizenship Education**

- Social Studies provide a broad knowledge of social issues as it affects man. Thereby equipping him to adequately apply a holistic approach in solving these problems through systematic, creative and critical thinking.
- The knowledge of man's physical environment provided by social studies put citizens at a vantage position to adequately and profitably preserve and -utilize the environmental resources of their community,<sup>11</sup>
- Social studies inculcates in the learners the understanding and knowledge of interrelationships that exist between one society and another. This fosters unity and interdependence of citizen who cut across the various strata of the society.
- Social Studies as an orientation process is committed to transmission and formation of values essential to the citizens in their practical approach to issues which may arise in the process of decision making in terms of scientific knowledge, ethnic, philosophical, religious and social considerations.
- Social Studies is concerned with the development of citizens who are morally, professionally, ethically sound, culturally and spiritually buoyant and socially and scientifically functional and efficient,
- Social Studies is an attitudinal engineering process wherein positive virtues of loyalty, honesty, patriotism, love, trustfulness, sincerity, etc which are the focus of citizenship education are encouraged and vigorously pursued.
- Social Studies trains children to live a full and useful life in society as it involves pupils in purposeful activities based upon observation and investigation of their immediate surroundings including their physical, social, political, economic and technological environment, (Fadeyi 1995:20).

### **Conclusion**

The ultimate goal of citizenship education is to produce humanistic, functional, effective and ethically sound individuals. To attain these objectives Social Studies must be encouraged and taught at all levels of our educational system with a greater emphasis on skills development and attitudes and values orientation.

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