

VIABLE CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY, PEACE AND UNITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The desire for sustainable democracy, peace and unity in Nigeria lies on good education that promotes peaceful co-existence, value orientation and acceptable moral behaviour. The major challenge of Nigeria democracy is electoral malpractices ranging from political thuggery, vote buying, political apathy, intimidation and insecurity among others. Citizenship Education which provides learners with the right knowledge of good governance and democratic culture, acceptable moral standard, peaceful co-existence and national unity is the medium through which sustainable democracy, peace and unity can be attained in Nigeria. This paper examines the various relevant knowledge provided by viable citizenship education for sustainable democracy, peace and unity in Nigeria. Democracy has been identified as the best form of government all over the world irrespective of its shortfalls. This paper also looked at the challenges confronting viable citizenship education towards sustainable democracy, peace and unity in Nigeria with a view of providing possible solutions. The need for viable citizenship education to be provided at all levels of education was recommended with support programmes by all stake holders. The paper concludes that for sustainable democracy, peace and unity in Nigeria, there is need for value re-orientation, good moral upbringing and democracy culture.

Keywords: Citizenship Education, Democracy, Peace, Unity, Moral Values.

Introduction

The sustainability of any Nation in all ramifications depends on many parameters. Chiefly amongst them are democratic governance, peaceful co-existence and unity. Nigeria today is experiencing a lot of challenges in virtually all the sectors of her national life ranging from politics, economy, educational, social, religious, to security.

With the return of democratic governance in Nigeria in 1999, individuals as well as groups had criticized the way and manner the system is been practiced. Irrespective of the contemptuous disregard, democracies which adhere to constitutional provisions and rule of law still remain the best any Nation can sought for.

Citizenship education as an aspect of learning inculcate in the citizenry a knowledge of democratic consciousness and participation, acceptable moral value, peaceful co-existence, national unity, and ethical behaviour geared toward good governance and sustainable development. Eze, Olabode and Bello (2014) sees citizenship education as a discipline that is geared towards molding citizens to become good, acceptable and contributing members of their societies. In line with the above statement, citizenship education has the capacity of promoting sustainable democracy, peace and unity needed in Nigeria.

Over the years, education on its part has been advocated as the panacea to all human problems. Education is important for the identification and exploration of natural, artificial and human resources for growth and development. Education in Nigeria is seen as an instrument “Par excellence” for effecting national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

The quest for viable citizenship education for sustainable democracy, peace and unity in Nigeria is attainable but not without conscious and concerted efforts by all stake-holders.

Democracy which is a system of government that allow people to exercise their political powers through voting either direct or indirect is seen as the best form of government and governance. Peace which is simply seen as the absence of war or crisis is needed for democracy to thrive. The agent of agent and unity in a country are citizens. Therefore citizen are bona-fide members of a given society or geographical location. Tega (2007) observed that identity consciousness in itself and its varied forms are not major problems in plural societies, but they become a problem when they are mobilized negatively and used as platform on which political action is organized. This paper therefore examines the viability of citizenship education for sustainable democracy, peace and unity in Nigeria.

Conceptual Frame Work Citizenship

The idea of citizenship originated from western philosophical reasoning. According to Anyaogu, Okorouga and Egesi (2015), citizenship is framed by the two great citizenship tradition – the Liberal and the Republican. These traditions have been established over time in different ways such as the Libertarian and Communitarian variations.

The liberal theories defined citizenship as a status which entitles individuals to a specific set of universal right granted by the states. The idea/ philosophy is that citizens act rationally towards the fulfillment of their interest and possesses “Passive notion” i.e. not taking responsibilities. On the other hand, the communitarian theories are centered on the notion of the socially enlightened citizen and community belonging. They maintained that the individuals realization of interest, identity and responsibility can only be defined in relation to the community he/ she belongs (Jones & Gaventa, 2002).

Citizenship is the status of a person as recognized under the constitution of a country or a sovereign state as being a legal member of such country or state (Bryan, 2009, Oniha & Edozor, 2019). It is the legal relationship between an individual and a state defined by the law of that state with attached duties and rights.

Education

Education is the anchor for national development and any nation working towards sustainable development must recognize education as such (Iwuamadi & Obasi, 2015). According to Ignatius (2016), “Education is a very strong weapon which liberate people from any form of slavery or bondage, promotes security and development”. It is an act and a scientific process for transmitting, preserving and improving the culture and quality of lives of people. It is the avenue through which man realizes his full potentials and become good member of his society.

Education is the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction especially at a school or University (Oniha & Edozor, 2019). It is also the process of facilitating learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits. It is the channel for sustainable democracy, peace and unity of a Nation.

Citizenship Education

Citizenship education is an aspect of education which instills desirable and acceptable moral values, attitudes, skills and knowledge into individuals (citizens) to enable them participate actively in the affairs of their groups and adjust functionally as good members of the society (Edobor & Maliki, 2021). This implies that citizenship education has the potency of training citizens to acquire relevant knowledge that will promote democratic society, peaceful environment and a united Nation.

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According to Eze, Olabode and Bello (2014), “citizenship education is a discipline that is geared towards molding citizens to become good, acceptable and contributing members of their societies”. He sees Citizenship education as a mechanism capable of promoting sustainable democracy, peace and unity among the people. Citizenship education is similar to Civic education, Social studies education, political science education moral education, moral philosophy and sociology.

The goal of citizenship education is to educate students on good moral conducts, cause and effects of HIV/ AIDS, drug abuse, anti-corruption and provisions of Nigerian constitution.

Viable Citizenship Education

Citizenship education is said to be viable when it is capable of developing citizen who are politically conscious and participatory in the government of their societies, promoting peaceful co-existence and maintaining the unity of their country. It is synonymous with active citizenship. “Active Citizenship” is intended to teach students to work together and take practical action, using their citizenship knowledge and understanding to contribute to a better society (Crick, 1998).

Democracy

Democracy originated from Athens- Greece where citizens participation in public affairs was encouraged. The concept was derived from two Greek words- “Demo and Kratein”. Demo in Greek means people while Kratein means ruling power (Edobor et al., 2019).

According to Igbafe et al., (2006) citing Abraham Lincoln described democracy “as the government of the people, by the people and for the people in a movement from the rule of the few to the rule of the many. This implies the rule of majority in which the supreme power of the state is vested in the people collectively and it is administered by them through their representatives.

Attributes of Democracy

Democracy as system of government is characterized by the following as identified by Edobor and Oniha (2019).

- a. Majority rule
- b. Free and fair election
- c. Periodic election
- d. Presence of opposition parties
- e. Diverse political parties
- f. Rule of law
- g. Protection of fundamental human rights
- h. Separation of powers
- i. Adherence to the constitution
- j. Fixed tenure of office

Merits of Democracy

According to Ojo (2015) the following are the merits of democracy;

1. Democracy promotes tolerance of views and opinions.
2. It promotes social justice.
3. It gives voters the opportunity of selecting their leaders.
4. It promotes political education.
5. Ensures political stability.

Demerits of Democracy

1. Democracy is very expensive to operate.
2. The so-called free and fair elections conducted in Nigeria were never free and fair (Ojo, 2015).

3. Slow decision making.
4. Manipulation of election results.
5. Political thuggery and electoral malpractices are eminent in democratic government.
6. Democracy may lead to unhealthy competition between/ among political parties and politicians (Edobor, Maliki & Oniha, 2019).

Peace

Peace connotes a state of tranquility, being quiet and living in harmony in ones environment. It simply means a state of being free from civil disturbance and the absence of war or trouble. For any adventure (economic, social, political, religious, educational) to occur and be successful, peace is a *sin qua non* (Edobor & Imade, 2019). This implies that for any meaningful development and sustainable growth, peace is a major parameter. Peace and unity in diversity is also needed for democracy to strive.

Relevance of Viable Citizenship Education

The relevance of viable citizenship education for sustainable democracy, peace and unity in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. Citizenship education is said to be viable when its outcome is capable of promoting national integration and the interaction of persons for the general development of the society.

Other relevance according to Garba (2015) includes;

1. Promotion of civic awareness.
2. Promotion of comprehensive political education.
3. Training of citizenship.
4. Inculcation of basic societal norms.
5. Enhancement of political socialization and participation.

Similarly, Edobor and Maliki (2011) highlighted other relevance of citizenship education viz;

6. Self identification.
7. Focused and visionary leaders.
8. Promoting sound and qualitative education.
9. Promotion of ethnic and religious tolerance.
10. Maintaining peaceful co-existence.

Challenges of Viable Citizenship Education for Sustainable Democracy, Peace and Unity in Nigeria.

Diverse factors are militating against citizenship education in Nigeria from making it viable in ensuring sustainable democracy, peace and unity. According to Oniha and Edobor (2019), a lot of problems abound in Nigeria in the process of inculcating citizenship education knowledge. Some of the problems includes;

- Heterogeneous nature of the country where in different ethnics, values, norms and ideologies exist.
- Diverse religion and cultural practiced in Nigeria also elicit a challenge to viable citizenship education.
- Parental background also affect the teaching of citizenship education as different parents exhibit different child/ children upbringing.
- Gender bias as some parents train only the male child/ children is another challenge to viable citizenship education.
- Western influence leading to neglect of our cure cultural values also poses a challenge.
- Extreme poverty making some people to neglect education.
- Scarcity of scholarship for training and refresher courses.
- Inadequate access to education as some communities lacks schools.

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➤ Incessant strike and industrial actions is also a challenge to viable citizenship education geared towards sustainable democracy, peace and unity in Nigeria.

Possible Solutions to the Challenges of Viable Citizenship Education for Sustainable Democracy, Peace and Unity in Nigeria.

Haven identified the challenges confronting viable citizenship education for sustainable democracy, peace and unity in Nigeria, the following are eminent as solutions:

- The heterogeneous nature of the country with diverse ethnics, values, norms and ideas should be harnessed to promote rich cultural identities.
- Religious and traditional leaders inculcate moral values and tolerance on their followers.
- Promoting ethnicity since most citizens pay more allegiance to their ethnic nationality and religious inclination (Ojo, 2015).
- Enlightenment of the masses because they are the defendant of democracy and good governance (Ojo, 2015).
- The constitution should be promoted and protected because it is the supreme law of the land and it makes each organs as well as individuals know where its functions starts and ends (Oniha & Edobor, 2019).
- Access to education by citizens should be intensified.

Conclusion

The relevance of viable citizenship education for sustainable democracy, peace and unity in Nigeria has been emphasized in this paper. Citizenship education as a subject is essentially designed for preparing young people who are defenders of democracy and good governance for their shared democratic life and social responsibilities in a changing world. Citizenship education is capable of promoting unity in diversity when properly taught.

Recommendations

Sequel to the need for viable citizenship education for sustainable democracy, peace and unity in Nigeria, the following recommendations are forwarded:

1. Effective and efficient citizenship education should be taught at all levels of education in Nigeria.
2. Enlightened parental guidance should be provided for all children.
3. Good moral upbringing and values re-orientation should be intensified by the appropriate agencies.
4. Democratic principles and culture should be adhered to completely..
5. The provisions of the Nigerian constitution should be observed and maintained.
6. The masses should be well-informed about their roles in promoting democracy, peace and national unity.
7. All leaders should teach and practice, peaceful co-existence and religious tolerance across Nigeria.

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