

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: AN INSTRUMENT FOR NIGERIA'S SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY

Ndopnoikpong, J. Afia

Abstract

Any functional educational programme must be capable of producing individuals who can realize their goals in the society. This means that it must produce useful individual. Citizenship education can be seen as an educative means in an independent state which enables individuals to be integrated into the social circle, acquire social skill and competencies, become socially sensitive and actively participate in their social responsibilities for maximum productivity and development. This paper therefore, assesses the role of citizenship education in the sustenance of Nigeria's democracy.

Introduction

It is not true to say that education was started in Africa by the Colonialist. This point can be more appreciated if the broader meaning of the term education is taken into consideration. Ever before the Colonial period, social education and other forms of education had been practiced and encouraged in all communities in Africa. What is now known as citizenship education was formerly called Civic Education. The aim of this education was to train the learners on civic responsibilities, including moral respects for elders in the community.

In Nigeria, the challenges of today's dynamic society, urbanization enormous development" in science and technology, exploration and many other challenges to values and processes of the open society necessitated the introduction of citizenship education. The third chapter of the 1999 constitution states the condition of citizenship in Nigeria. Nigeria citizenship could be by birth, registration or naturalization. The constitution demands, that those who acquire citizenship by registration or naturalization be persons of good character. One of the objectives of citizenship Education is to produce the people with good character.

It is an accepted fact that sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from whom government through the constitution derives all its power and authority. One of the implications of this for intelligent citizenship is that every person must know his right in the society. All Nigerians should know the history of the country's constitution, its evolution and the contents.

The aim of this work is to expose the Nigerian citizens to those important facets of citizenship. The responsible citizen is thus expected to imbibe the body of knowledge, set values and behavioural orientations which are considered necessary for the sustenance of our democracy and the well being of our Nation.

The challenges before us are not only producing intelligent citizens but also active and responsible citizens who can contribute in making the Nigerian society a better place.

Citizenship Education aims at producing responsible and functional, citizen who participate in and easily adjust to the society. Nigeria needs committed citizenry who see the Nigeria society as themselves and vice versa. The future of Nigeria depends on the production of involved, committed and properly oriented citizens. Such ideals citizens will materialize our dream of a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united strong and self reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy, a land and full of opportunities for all citizens.

Conceptual Definition of Citizenship Education

As earlier stated, *citizenship* .Education is not a new concept to Nigeria or any other developed or developing country. *It came into* existence with the development of the societies. What seems to be new is its introduction into me school curriculum as a subject.

The introduction of citizenship Education *into* the school curriculum follows the report of the political bureau set up by the federal government in 1986, under the chairmanship of Professor S. J. Crokey. The recommendation of the committee was based on the concept that the citizens have little or no affection for the station (Nigeria).

A curriculum guideline on citizenship Education was drawn up by the Nigerian Education Research and development *Council* and presented *for* approval at the 38th meeting of the National Council on education on September 1996 at Calabar, Cross River State.

The term 'Citizenship Education' is variously defined. It may mean different things to different people in ordinary conversation. But this can lead to a great deal of confusion when socio-political issues are discussed.

To avoid this confusion in, communication within the subject, a precise definition of the concept is necessary. Mizieobi (1992:92), refers to Citizenship Education as the educative means in a sovereign state whereby the citizens or individuals become socially integrated with (the social circle, "acquire social skill and competencies; become socially sensitive and actively participate in their social responsibility for maximum productivity and development.

To Dubey and Barth (1980), citizenship Education is perceived as an indoctrination of individuals in things considered as a society's basic values. Citizenship Education to Ezeibe (1988) is 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 a positive and active role in the society". This definition sees citizenship Education as an aspect of formal education but suffice it to say that although the school is an agency for spreading citizenship Education, it can also be taught informally,

One central theme which runs through definition of citizenship Education is the preparation for social responsibilities. Howsan and Howell (1976), posit that a fundamental societal need is to socialize its citizens, particularly its children and youths in the ways of society. According to them, this task can be referred to as the Citizenship Education. Citizenship Education therefore, is the process of preparing citizens formally or informally so as to develop in them an acceptable behavioural pattern that will enable them perform their social and political roles as responsible citizens of the state. It focuses on the utilization of knowledge from whatever source in tackling practical problems of the society. The ultimate aim is to develop responsible citizens who will be functional and voluntarily utilize the available human and material resources to meet the practical needs of the society.

The Philosophy and Objective of Citizenship Education in Nigeria

Citizenship Education was introduced into the school system purposely to educate our youths and the entire citizen about the danger of numerous unhealthy social tendencies include armed and pen robbery, drug abuse and addiction, arson and vandalization of public property, examination malpractice, lukewarm attitude towards their political obligation and rights and reckless infringement on the personal liberties of citizen, it allows for the training of young citizens to accept their responsibilities and show eagerness to serve the country.

The philosophy of citizenship education in-Nigeria is built on the following:

- (i) Awareness of and sensitization of Nigerian to the rule and regulation governing all Nigerian as contained in the Nigeria constitution
- (ii) Awareness of Right and Obligations of citizen to government and society and the reciprocal government responsibilities.

Both of these were believed would foster socio-political stability and facilitate national development. This therefore means that citizenship education should serve as a means whereby citizens are taught basic rudiments aimed at making them fully aware of their right and duties and to respect the right of others and also produce a responsible well-informed and self-reliant Nigerian citizen.

The Relevance of Citizenship Education to the Sustenance of Democracy in Nigeria

Education according to Fafunwa (1981) is the process of transmitting the societal values and norms to those who are committed to knowing it. This means that Education is a veritable tool for bringing about continuity and technological advancement, societal integration and nation building. Education has proved to be a life-long instrument per excellence for socio-political change. The world is now becoming a global community and lives with the use of science and technology, to

achieve science and technology nations are known to have invested heavily in the education of the citizenry with this in mind, the Nigerian. Government saw it as a necessity to introduce the national policy on education. The policy laid emphasis on 6-3-3-4 system of Education with a background in science and technology discipline.

The policy noted that the liberal arts should not be relegated or discouraged since humanities act as the potent force for development in personal and moral integrity. There has been the belief that education gives life to freedom. It is therefore the responsibility of the state to discover the kind of orientation that will facilitate that freedom. This orientation is found in the study of citizenship Education. Citizenship Education should not be seen as a study but as a way of life. It offers ideal opportunities to examine, clarify and isolate needs, assets and problem of the society. Through proper development, implementation and utilization of the knowledge that citizenship education provides about the society or the best society, the right environment could be created for evolving the right laws, ethics and values of the society in a way far superior to what could be obtained through the application of any knowledge attainable from any other disciplines.

Nigeria and indeed our societies need in many cases, a new value system that will assist the citizens to appreciate better meaning of democracy which embodies loyalty, service as well as appreciating, as Plato says "that law which are not established for the good of the state are bogus laws. Citizenship Education will enable the citizens to know the value of academic freedom, to express his opinion on issues of national importance which even forms the backbone of Democracy. Citizenship Education enables the citizen to know that power belongs to the electorate or the citizens and that the government is only there to use his power to satisfy the need to the citizens. The continuous existence of a regime is a function of a continuous support of the citizen. When the support is withdrawn by the citizens either in the form of non-payment of taxes, violent demonstration, protest and social revolts, non-violent Civil disobedience and outright opposition, the government ceases to have a full legitimacy. Therefore, citizen's support is necessary for the existence and survival of any democratic government.

Citizenship Education will involve the spirit of political participation and democratic virtue. When citizens know about the workings of a government, government's responsibilities, duties and obligation to them thus will spur up participation. Therefore citizenship education is to train the citizens to be politically active, knowledgeable of the government, be aware of the problems of the nation and to be better placed to absorb political shocks. It will help create political censoriousness and nation awareness thereby reducing political apathy, alienation and indifferences among youth.

As Oguna and Ogalle (1991) put it, if citizens are properly deviated, such citizens will develop the intellectual ability to think reasonably, critically- and logically. The citizens will be endowed with brevity, skill, vision, foresight and capacity in carrying out national responsibilities.

Nigeria have been experiencing political instability because of the absent of political vision y a number of Nigerian politicians and administrators. Proper exposure to the content of citizenship Education will put the citizens in a position to want to know 'why', 'how% 'what', and 'when' of the happening in the state. Citizenship Education will help the citizens to acquire more broad and open national beliefs, values, orientation and attitude. It helps to transfer the thoughts, loyalties and attachments of citizens from their local ethic groups to the nation-state. Citizenship education is basically to train the citizen for future leadership roles Leadership in any sphere of life, will require adequate preparation of the citizens with such qualities as discipline, devotion, dedication, courage, wisdom, imagination, vision, selflessness, honesty, creativity and respect for justice and equity.

Citizenship Education will finable individuals to know their rights, the dignity of the human person and the idea of limited power for government and its agencies. The knowledge and the awareness of individual rights and obligations give people the freedom to fight for themselves- It equips the individuals to know what to say about the society, when to say and how to say it. Lastly citizenship Education will prepare the citizens to become social, economical and political modernizers; contributors to effective social changes and initiators of National integration. It will reinforce national identify, national unity, the love for the state which are all useful elements in the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

Problems Confronting Effective Citizenship Education

According to Eddie (2001), the product of a given educational system reflects the quality and role of the teachers within that system. Thus for the objectives of citizenship Education to be realized, much depends on the teachers as managers of the school system.

Unfortunately, the teaching of citizenship education in Nigeria tends to be clouded by certain problems which include:

- (a) Inadequate supply of experienced and trained teachers in the field of citizenship education. Studies have revealed that less than 32.8% of the teachers in the area of citizenship education were trained in other areas outside citizenship education (Ibe Bassey 1988).
- (b) There are inadequate books in citizenship education. As such, teachers use mainly books which were written by foreign authors whose cultural settings and values differ significantly from that of Nigeria.
- (c) There is a generally lack of commitment on the part of teachers as a result of the poor remuneration packages they receive from government. This apparent display of negative attitudes on the part of the teachers who are the role models for the learners, significantly affect the effective realization of the objective of Citizenship Education.
- (d) The greatest hindrance to citizenship education is lack of sincere and committed leadership in Nigeria. Our society is filled with hypocritical leaders who for personal aggrandizement, tell lies and engage in all forms of corruption. The youths become easily affected by this trend and it becomes difficult for them to exhibit the positive values upheld by citizenship education.

Recommendation and Conclusion

The purpose of citizenship Education is to enable the individuals to live comfortably in the society making sure that he knows his rights and obligation under a democratic government. Citizenship Education is seen as an independent state which enables individual to be integrated into the social milieu, acquire social skills and competencies, become socially sensitive and actively participate in their social responsibility for maximum productivity and development. In order to bring about the realization of the objectiveness of citizenship education in the sustenance of democracy, it becomes imperative that the teachers who form the pivot of the educational system should be adequately motivated to enable them as role models display attitude worthy of emulation by the learners.

Also, it is necessary that people who occupy public offices display positive attitude such as commitment to the public good, honesty and discipline, otherwise the concept of citizenship Education which aims at bringing about better Nigerian society will ever remain an illusion and our democracy will not stand.

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