

**CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AS A VERITABLE TOOL FOR SELF
RELIANCE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This paper discusses citizenship education as a veritable tool for self reliance and national development in Nigeria. The paper surveys citizenship education, the concepts of self reliance, national development and factors militating against such concepts. The paper stresses a clarion call on Nigerians in administrative positions, political office holders, various ministries and departments of information to embrace firmly on awareness campaign to educate the citizenry towards societal transformation if the citizenry are not connected with the policies and programmes of the government. The paper concluded that citizenship education be strategize not in the school system alone but in multi – dimensional sectors of the economy in order to reach the unreached towards a better society.

Education, awareness, enlightenment, sensitization, conscientization to mention a few, are currently not felt in an appreciable percentage in Nigeria despite the global transformation in technology, education and science. Pine policies, and fabulous programmes by the government are always on-the-run, but implementation and result orientation are most at times on a drastic paralysis, due to lack of inadequate knowledge of such policies and programmes by the citizenry. These factors

and probably many more gingered Late Martin Luther King of America in his generation to say this; “the prosperity of a country depends not only on the abundance of its revenue, nor in the strengths of its fortification, but in the number of its cultivated citizens, in its men and women enlightenment and character...”Citizenship education can serve as a potent instrument to addressing the aforementioned vices. Self reliance and national development will surely gain momentum if and only if,

war against illiteracy and ignorance is waged, through proper citizenship education in formal and informal perspectives.

Concept of Citizenship Education

According to Dubey and Barth (1980), "citizenship education is seen as indoctrinating individuals in things considered as society's basic value". This refers to the educative means in a sovereign state whereby the citizens become socially and politically aware, socially 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. Similarly, Bank and Clegg (1977), conceptualizes citizenship education as; "education aim at producing critical and reflective individual who will be able to improve any nation because of their ability to close the gap between the ideal and the real." Okam, (1998), sees it as; "a form of moral standard to which human beings could conceive in other to participate in the reform of the society". Citizenship education equips the individual with pertinent knowledge and skills that will enable one contribute meaningfully to the development and progress of an ever – changing dynamic modern world or adopt to the world that is in constant flux and contribute to the nation's future growth and development (Meziobi, 1992).

From the above classical definitions, it could be deduce that citizenship education is an educational therapy which rejuvenates the citizens in a

holistic manner to fit better into stream of the nation and contribute toward the nation's political, social economic, cultural and religious transformations.

The Concept of Self Reliance

The concept of self reliance can never be forgotten in the historical epoch of the regime of former military administration of General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida form in the Late 80s through early 90s. The man coined this policy through one of his programmes; "Mass Mobilization for Self-Reliance and Economic Recovery" (MAMSER). The establishment of the directorate for social mobilization was put forward by the then constitution drafting committee of the regime. One of the major functions of the directorate was to mobilize and educate the Nigerian citizenry and to help the people in our country to grasp issues and be able to analyze critically, the political trends in the country and to make a good political judgment etc. (Jamfa, 1990).

Self reliance is a conception of development in which people of a given society are mobilized in order to transform their physical, technological, political, administrative, economic and social environments, for their general well – being and those of other humanity. It is a development strategy which relies mainly on people's ability to bring about self generating and self sustaining socio-economic and political system which is problem searching, problem learning and problem solving. Self reliance as a conceptual tool has both ideological and

instrumental dimensions (Nwankwo and Nwosu, 1988).

As an ideology, it entails development of a perspective and “we” consciousness in a people that their destiny and survival lay in their determined and sustained efforts. Rather than on the efforts and directions of other people who have transformed their environment for their own well – being. He concluded that when self reliance is internalized as an ideology, it leads to the recovery of people’s self respect, self confidence, self worth, and self actualization.

Historically, the concept of self reliance could be traced to the fourth National Development Plan (1981 – 1985). One of the objectives of the plan is “greater reliance”. This has been defined in the plan to mean increased dependence on our own resources in seeking to achieve the various objectives of the society as well as efforts to achieve optimum utilization of human and material resources. The challenge to this factor is that the implementation of this development plan does not appear to be reflecting objectives of a self – reliant development.

Ikoku (1980) cited in Nwankwo and Nwosu, (1988) self reliance is seen as “the right and ability to set one’s goal and then realizing them as much as possible through one’s own efforts, using one’s own factors”. Therefore self reliance, in the arena of political and administrative perspective does not imply uncritical imitation of administrative and political

models that have been developed elsewhere. For administrative and political changes to be meaningful under the concept of self reliance, they have to be based on the people’s history, tradition, values, norms, needs, participation and ability.

Five Dimensions of Self – Reliance

Nwankwo and Nwosu (1988), categorized the dimension of self reliance to include:

- i. the individual
- ii. the community
- iii. the local government
- iv. the state government and
- v. the national

At the Individual Level; self reliant development is measured in terms of the following criteria:

The degree of people’s participation in the administrative and political process at the various levels of government.

The extent to which the individuals is accountable to the people for participation in the political and administrative system. The extent to which the individual is able to understand and interpret the political and administrative process.

At the Community Level; self reliance implies the ability of the people to identify their needs and resources. It would also involve the use of local initiative and resource to decide on project and programmes that can best satisfy the needs of the communities involved outside help

could be sought where necessary, especially in terms of equipment, personnel and finance with a view of utilizing of the available services being offered by other levels of government and with those of local, state and federal government.

At the Local Government Level; the ability of the local authority to maintain its autonomy and viability as the third-tier of government is necessity. To do this, effective avenues and utilization of internally generated revenue should be prioritized in order to avoid over dependency on external sources. This may further curtail the usurpation of the autonomy of the third tier system by the two superordinate tiers and many more.

At the State Level; self reliance implies the inter-dependent relationship between states on the one hand and between states and central government on the other hand. It also implies the ability of the states to harness the human and material resources within their boundaries to bring about development on the administrative and political institutions will be self – sustaining, self – generating and congruent with needs, tradition and culture of our people.

At the National Level; they opined that self reliance entails the careful building and encouragement of relevant political and administrative ideologies, structures and practices which will enable the country mobilize its human and material resources for the purpose of socio – economic

growth as well as the maintenance of political independence and regional integration in the relevant areas of national interest. The degree of self-reliance at this level can be measured through:

- i the proportion of internally generated revenue to the total revenue.
- ii the degree of dependency upon external debts for capital and recurrent expenditure.
- iii the extent to which the country's ideology as well as its political and administrative structures and practices are rooted in its administrative sub-cultures and based on the nation's developmental needs.
- iv the extent to which the country's administrative and political system are not mere reflections of models that are developed elsewhere.
- v the extent to which our foreign policy is based on national interest and security needs.
- vi the extent to which the nation's bilateral and multilateral relations with other countries, multinational and international organization are based on interdependent rather than dependent relationships.

National Development

Psachoropoulos and Woodhull (1985), cited in Lere (2011), posited that National Development is the improvement of a country's productive capacity through changes in social attitudes, values and behavior and finally, changes toward social and political equality and eradication of poverty. As stated early, national development is a complex phrase, but for

the purpose of this paper, national development is characterized with national awareness, technological development, rural development/transformation and agricultural development.

National Awareness

One thing that the average Nigerian cannot be blamed for is public awareness right from schools, market places, banks, villages and cities etc. the pathetic situation is that Nigerians are not aware of things happening in their country or fatherland. Worst of all, some people did not know that Nigeria has thirty six states and the federal capital territory (36) some did not know, the existence of any political party apart from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) or the dominant political party within their area or region. In some part of this country, if people learn that you are from the North, they conclude that you are Hausa/Fulani. From the West and East, they conclude that you are Yoruba and Ibo respectively. Public awareness supersedes knowledge of daily occurrences in and outside Nigerian. It also includes keeping in touch with the people of this country and being acquainted with their cultures and ethnic dialects. Awareness includes, but is not limited to enlightenment about government programmes and policies only. When one examines critically and objectively, you will discover that it is acutely lacking in us as countrymen and women (Ada, 1990). Citizenship education through enlightenment campaigns, rallies and symposiums can cushion the effect of awareness on the citizens.

Technological Development

Technology is the practical application of scientific knowledge to produce objective of one's need. Put differently, it is the transformation, the theoretical or mental skill to a practical or manual skill for the purpose of exploiting the material environment to a physical advantage. (Timothy, 1990). Arising from Nigeria's quest for a sound technological base are two contending advocates expressing themselves on how this task could be achieved. The first one pulls its weight behind the idea of "transfer of technology", and buttresses the opinion while the other opponent argued that technological transfer is inimical to any meaningful national development, noting that what is transferred, in essence, is colossal economic resources from underdeveloped economy to already developed ones. They argued that it is better developed than imported (Timothy, 1990). By encouraging local technology and educating citizens on the importance of self development, the better of our resource control and development.

Rural Transformation

The challenges of rural transformation in Nigeria today cannot be overemphasized due to its necessity. It goes a long way in improving the quality of life in the rural areas in multi-dimensional facets. This probably was the motivating force that triggered General Ibrahim Babangida's regime to introduce the programme "Directorate for food, roads and rural infrastructure" (DFRRI) Electricity, portable drinking water, good

roads, schools, health centres and like, are challenging factors to contemporary rural dwellers and if provided, even at a low geometrical progression, can go a long way in curbing rural urban migration with its attendant social problems. Abah (2000), saw rural transformation and development as process of planned change for which one approach or the other is adopted for improvement and transformation of the lot of the rural populace. Similarly, Kesuwo (2009) saw it as a process whereby the national programmes are articulated through various governmental and non-governmental agencies to correct the harmful trends in rural life.

Overdependence on government for provision of amenities would be a thing of the past if citizenship education, through awareness is done to enable us know that, through communal effort, they can change their environment for good.

Agricultural Development: In the words of Ijere in Kesuwo (2004), agriculture plays a significant role in national development, apart from providing food for the growing population; it provides in addition, the raw – material and fiber for industrial production. It is concerned with the inter-dependence between farming and other industrial process as well as the impact of decision making of farming operations. It contributes to national development in these ways.

a. Through the export of agricultural products, foreign exchange is earned for economic development.

- b. As the production process and output for farmers improves, the agricultural sector releases labour for other non-farm sector of the economy.
- c. Agriculture contributes to increased capital formation needed for investment and industrial expansion.
- d. As the purchasing of the rural population increases as a result of increased farm output and net income, the demand for industrial goods and products for other non farm sectors is stimulated.

Constraints to Self Reliance and National Development

A lot factors constitute impediments to effective self reliance and national development within the Nigerian context. Some of the factors are discussed below:

Human Attitude: Mukerjee (1979), cited in Lere (2011), noted that attitude refers to one's feelings, thoughts and predispositions to behave in some particular manner towards some aspect of one's environment. He claims that attitudes are best expressed when individuals make statement about their feelings or opinions about certain objects, issues or things. Similarly Ozoji (2008), conceptualizes attitudes in a tri-element concept embodying beliefs, emotions and behaviours. According to him, these characterized human beings in intrapersonal and in social interaction with each other. The two advocates above conclusively stressed on positive attitude in different ramifications towards self reliance and national development.

Nigerians need to imbibe on the old-time culture of love and tolerance, respecting views, culture and norms of the diverse populace of the country. However, citizenship education teaches morality and social modification which can contribute to molding a good behavioural trait of man.

Financial Problems

No true and meaningful self reliance and national development can come to pass without adequate financial background. This factor led to Torkaa (2010), expression that one of the problems inhibiting the take – off of Nigeria as a self reliant nation is financial paralysis. Nigeria is a nation blessed with natural and human resources but every nook and crannies of ministries, departments, and establishments are facing with an up-hill task of financial problem. Self reliant and national development may hardly be actualized if money is not released to various sectors of the economy.

Low Indigenous Technological Base

The Nigerian contemporary technological development is neither that of identifying efficient technology nor that of managing what technology is adopted, but, the fact that the indigenous technological base is extremely low. This attendant problem led to the importation of technology from abroad, and the adaption of foreign technology to the circumstances of Nigeria. (Torkaa, 2010).

Inadequate Strong and Relevant Ideology

Even though the fourth national plans stresses on the need for greater

reliance and national development. Little or no effort has been made to explain. Society should be organized and people mobilize in other to achieve the goals of self reliant and development. Some intellectuals have individually held conflicting views on the meaning of self – reliance. Moreover, because of the conflicting ideological orientation, no group of scholars in the country has yet emerged with any meaningful consensus on the operational definition of self reliance.

Ethnic Politics

This phenomenon arises in situation where political decisions by both politicians and electorates are based mainly on ethnic consideration. Ethnic politics tends to encourage the persistence of ideological orientations which place undue emphasis on the sharing of resources among different ethnic groups rather than focusing on how to mobilize people for the betterment of the country. This probably is one of the major factors that cause disunity in Nigeria today.

Private Investors

Reluctance on the part of private manufacturing companies to encourage research and development with the use of local raw materials, this condition encourages excessive dependence upon foreign companies for parts and raw materials.

Leadership Problem

One of the factors bedeviling our economy from the micro to the macro levels is efficient and effective leadership

techniques that inculcate resource management and utilization, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects, proper accountability and many more.

Crises/Societal Instability

No meaningful socio-economic and general transformation can thrive in the atmosphere of crises. Many developmental strives have been dislocated due to crises in Nigeria. Some of the major ones are the Islamic Boko Haram sect, inter and intra boundary disputes, religious crisis, and economic crises to mention a few.

Conclusion

Nigeria as a country shall surely regain her lost glory if citizenship education is giving a priority in the blue – print of the government of the day. If the citizens are connected to the stream of the government through awareness campaign, enlightenment and other vices that may make them belong, they in-turn will evolve ways for self development and building the nation at large. Self reliance and national development shall not just be a fallacy by the government but ways towards its actualization shall be unveil by the government and policy makers. If done, it will promote the weight and reputation of Nigeria among the League of Nations.

Recommendations

a. Our attitudes as humans determine our direction of operation and ultimately our measure of national development and self reliance. Citizenship education

can help, through the teaching of morality and social modification.

- b. Government and private organizations should provide enough funds to cater for developmental projects. This will encourage developmental efforts by the masses and some governmental agencies, thus enhancing self reliance and national development.
- c. Nigeria's industrial and technological base should be expanded without further delay. Emphasis must be laid on the advancement of science and technology in Nigeria both by way of creating experts and popular education of the masses on the essence of technological development.
- d. A national ideology for self reliant and national development should be developed. This ideology must be capable of mobilizing people through citizenship enlightenment and propelling society towards the goals of self reliance and national development.
- e. Programmes of mass education should be developed to disseminate the ideology of self reliance, increase the level of development of consciousness among the people, and change individual attitudes that are constraints to achieving the objectives of a self reliance and national development.
- f. The state and local government should embark on more viable economic projects in addition to improving their

internal revenue generating system. This will reduce their dependency on the central government for capital and recurrent expenditures.

- g. The leadership should insist on higher level accountability and discipline for society.
- h. Government and citizens, machinery of government, religious organization and many more should preach peace. Uprising and bloodshed retrograde development and self reliance, resources meant for development are wasted on security and other logistics etc.

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