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# THE IMPERATIVE FOR CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: PANACEA FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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By

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## **Abstract**

*In recent years, Citizenship Education, a multi-dimensional programme of study, which is aimed at the training of minds, inculcating morals, imparting knowledge and appreciation of the physical environment in various facets of life, has been seen and regarded by many scholars as a foundation on which the socio – cultural, economic and political values of any given developed or developing nation is built. However, in contemporary Nigerian society, reverse is the case. The teaching and practice of Citizenship Education at secondary school level, which is regarded as the preparatory ground for leaders of tomorrow, has been quite ineffective, skeletal, and disappointing. Hence, the inevitable result of gross indiscipline in Nigerian secondary schools, which has become a source of worry and concern, and which is regarded by many as one of the imminent factors hindering economic development in Nigeria. This paper therefore, examines the inherent dangers that the neglected teaching of Citizenship Education has given birth to,; and how it affects the economic development in Nigeria. It also proffers solution to the growing menace of indiscipline in our secondary schools as a means of improving Nigerian economy.*

Nigeria as a nation has yearned for economic development for so long. It has been the desire of the government. According to Igbuzor (2006), “Nigeria was one of the 50 richest countries in the early 1970s, has retrogressed to become one of the poorest countries at the threshold of the twenty-first century”.

A cursory look at the Nigerian society reveals that it is morally bankrupt. This bankruptcy has led to a frightening level of moral decay that has shaken the moral

foundations of many traditional Nigerian societies; a society that is characterized by all sorts of societal vices, which range from terrorism, indiscipline in secondary schools, inter and intra – tribal crises, corruption at all level etc.

The people of the country have always desired to create a heaven on earth, a state of employment, peace, joy, victory, unity, national integration, freedom, true justice, equitable distribution of the nation’s wealth, and above all, an egalitarian and just society. To actualize all these, several conscious efforts have been made by the federal government without any remarkable success. For instance, the inauguration of ICPC, EFCC, and Council of Inter – Religious harmony. Various suggestions from well meaning Nigerians are being made too to ensure that Nigeria remains united and saved from imminent total economic collapse in other words, a Nigeria in which the national consciousness of her citizen will be high. This may be achieved through the teaching of citizenship education at secondary school level since the actors and perpetrators of all these social vices were once students in secondary schools. Citizenship education has therefore become an increasingly important subject at secondary school level for countries, especially, African nations to educate their citizens not only about their rights as citizens of their various countries, but also, their responsibilities so that they can imbibe high sense of commitment, loyalty, dedication, and discipline to be able to move the nation forward economically. Charity, they say begins at home.

### **What is Citizenship Education?**

Ozumba and Etang (1995;23) explained Citizenship education as the “Totality of learning, instruction, equipping, which citizens need to be able to play his/her role, discharger his/her responsibilities, know his/her rights, understand his/her country, the constitution, the politics, the ethics, the religious, the ethos and the ideals that make the national geo – political entity”.

To complete this explanation, like a building with a solid foundation Fadeiye (1995) opines that citizenship education is the kind of education given to the citizens of a country with a view to making them responsible people, capable of contributing meaningfully to the overall development of their country. Citizenship education therefore teaches knowledge, understanding about politics, the law and the economy and skills to participate effectively and responsibly in public and democratic life.

Through citizenship education, students:

1. Explore questions about democracy, justice, inequalities, how we are governed and organized;
2. Learn to work together to create solutions that try to address challenges facing neighbourhood, and wider communities; and
3. Develop political literacy to make a positive contribution to society as informed and responsible citizens.

## **Education in Nigeria**

Education is the greatest force that can be used in bringing a positive change to a nation. It is the greatest investment that a nation can make for the quick development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources

It was in realization of this that a National Policy on Education was formulated for the country. The policy seeks the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity, the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society, the training of the mind in understanding of the world around us; and the acquisition of the appropriate skills, abilities, and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individuals to live in and contribute to the development of the nation.

In order to preserve the rich culture of the people, government of Nigeria encourages the learning of at least one major language - Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba – in schools. In addition to the English language, which is the official language in Nigeria and the medium of instruction in Nigerian educational institutions, students are encouraged to learn French language too as a matter of policy.

## **Secondary Education in Nigeria**

Secondary education is the form of education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. It is comprehensive but has a core curriculum designed to broaden pupils' knowledge and outlook. The core curriculum is the group of subjects, which every pupil must take in addition to his/her specialties. These include English language, Mathematics, one Nigerian language, one of the following alternative subjects; Physics, Chemistry, and Biology, One of the Literature in English, Geography, History, Agricultural Science or a vocational subject. The core subjects are basic subjects, which will enable a student to offer arts or science in higher education. However, it is obvious from the breakdown of the core subjects that citizenship education, which is the bedrock of effective state of learning is unavoidably not indicated. This may explain the reason why indiscipline in secondary schools is ever growing at alarming rate, hence, the fall in the standard of education and economic retrogression in Nigeria.

## **Description of Secondary School Education in Nigeria**

The Nation Policy on Education (section 4) describes secondary education as follows:

1. Secondary education is the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage;
2. The broad goals of secondary education shall be to prepare the individual for
  - (a) useful living within the society; and
  - (b) Higher education.

3. In specific term, secondary education shall
  - (a) provide all primary school leavers with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background
  - (b) Offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles;
  - (c) provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at the sub – professional grades;
  - (d) develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world cultural heritage;
  - (e) inspire its students with a desire for self improvement and achievement of excellence;
  - (f) foster national unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity;
  - (g) raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciates those values specified under our broad national goals, and lives as good citizens;
  - (h) provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, and economic development of the country.
  
4. To achieve the stated goals, secondary education shall be of six years duration, given in two stages – a junior secondary school stage and a senior secondary school stage; each shall be of three years duration.

Apart from noting the two broad aims of secondary education in Nigeria, namely; preparing the individuals for higher education, it should be noted also that secondary education is part of the design to achieve the national education aims and objectives (which themselves were developed from the national objectives). These national educational aims and objectives are:

- (1) The inculcation of national consciousness and unity;
- (2) The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- (3) The training of the mind in understanding of the world around; and
- (4) The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society (Federal Republic of Nigeria; 1998).

The big question on national development is; To what extent has secondary education in Nigeria achieve these lofty aims and objectives (Joshua; 2004)?

### **Roles of Secondary Education in Economic Development in Nigeria**

Secondary education is the pivot around which the development of the nation's economy revolves. It is the engine room that provides the input and resources into the nation's economy and tertiary education production system. A focus on standard in secondary schools is a timely and wise attempt at identifying the direction at which the nation is heading, and determining whether as a nation, we are on the course towards realizing our dreams in running secondary education or whether we should return to the drawing board. When we get it right at secondary level, we are likely going to get it right at the tertiary education level, which is the final stage of production; and part of the team that will not proceed to tertiary institutions will become useful and productive members of the society. In other words, for economic growth in any nation, a key ingredient is in the standard of education, and in the methodology of sustain it. Good education, one that meets the standards prescribed for it, most inevitably leads to a well – managed and progressive economy.

### **Education and Discipline**

Education, as defined by Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English is “the training of the mind and character”. Education in this sense can be said to be a thing that should reflect a positive change in our attitude, character, mode of dressing, behaviour, manner of talking or relating with people. If this is so, then, Education and Discipline become inseparable entities. This is because education teaches moral values and it helps an individual to become useful and contributive citizen of the country. In other words, education without discipline is no education.

Thomas (1973) reiterated in his African Journal of Education (Vol. XXIII, No3) that the low academic achievement in schools today are less disciplined than that of the past. After carrying out a research on how well are our schools, he came up with two reasons; first, by the fact that education then was seen by the community as the surest means of social mobility, so, school learning was taken seriously. Thus, the authority of the teacher was enhanced in and out of the school. Secondly, the Nigerian parents worked hand-in-hand with the schoolmaster in the upbringing of the children. For instance, the parents in those days regarded rebellion in school as rebellion in the home and vice versa. Parents would plead with teachers then to spare not the rod in the upbringing and training of the children.

He therefore accredited the changes in the academic achievement of students in schools today to the arrival of the new age of rapid economic and cultural changes and of co-operation at international level.

### **Indiscipline in Nigerian Secondary Schools**

Indiscipline is negative form of discipline. Zubaida (2009), citing Dare, et al (2004), defines discipline in schools as respect for school laws and regulations and the

maintenance of and established standard of behaviour, and implies self control, restraint, respect for oneself and others. A behaviour that contradicts the above becomes indiscipline. According to Tuner (2002), if students cultivate the habit of discipline in schools, there will be a smooth running in the school system but the reverse will be the case if the students are not discipline.

In a study of the incidence of major offences in Nigerian secondary schools between 1964 and 1966, Nwana (1971) identifies the following categories of offence which were committed in various degrees of frequencies as listed in the table

<b>Type of offence</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Sex offences	56	0.79
Stealing	609	9.60
Dishonesty	541	7.64
Disobedience	2170	30.65
Truancy	2076	29.32
Assault and Insult	877	12.39
Drug offences	357	5.27
Wickedness	380	5.37
Strike or Demonstration	15	0.21
Total	7,081	100

Source: Nwana, 1991.

A glance through this list of misbehavior and a quick recollection of our experience in secondary schools will confirm that though judgment may change with time and place, there is still some array of discipline problems which secondary schools encounter in their professional careers.

Similarly, Zubaida (2009) identifies various forms of indiscipline among secondary school students, such as truancy, lateness to school, cultism, drug abuse, insulting/assaulting, stealing, rioting and many other anti – social vices. According to Zubaida (2009) and Eyinde (1999), a number of these acts of indiscipline were directed at constituted authorities and established rules. The problem has turned to a national issue and concern.

The impending danger and catastrophic effects that this may spell on the political, educational, and economic values of the nation has geared up our leaders in the past to remedy the situation but the problem lingers on.

One of the cardinal objectives of education as spelt out in the National Policy on Education (2004) (revised) is to inculcate right type of values and attitudes for the

survival of the individual and the Nigerian society. Onyije and Ojedapo (2010) identify some factors that cause indiscipline among students. These include government attitude to education (in the area school curriculum and provision of basic infrastructures). Therefore, there is need to get at the root causes of indiscipline amongst the secondary school students with a view to finding a solution. In this light, inclusion of the Citizenship Education in the secondary school curriculum and in government policy on education as well as its effective teaching and practice at secondary level may prove to be the major solution to this menace of which we all have been looking for.

### **Roles of Education in Nigeria**

Of late, much attention has been given to the roles schools are expected to play in the training of students for better citizens of the country. This explains why the federal government of Nigeria (2004) stated that “Education is an instrument for change and development”.

In his opinion, Iyewaram (1989) defines education as an instrument by which young people/members are brought up and socialized so as to become productive and active citizens of the country. This is not to say that the roles that education plays in societies are the same. Metzieobi, Dominike and Osakwe (1996) share similar opinion by asserting that the emphasis placed on the goals of education differ from culture to culture and from society to society; and that education is viewed from different perspectives by different people. Some see it as a means of training the mind and intellect.

Similarly, Ukeje (1996) opines that some people view education as an instrument for achieving a specific objective such as socialization and means of social mobility while others see education as a means of inculcating a particular ideology. Contrary to this, Yusuf (2005) opines that the school should not be used as a tool for training in citizenship only, rather, it should be directed at the training of the mind and the development of the intellect.

To this end, some Social studies educators like Metzieobi (2000), Ejegbe (1993), Obike (1993) and Osakwe (1993) assert that education is an effective tool for citizenship and civic responsibility and the school has always performed the major roles in inculcating in its members self reliance, independence, responsibility, and moral uprightness.

With the current situation of things in Nigeria today, where corruption, indiscipline, political thuggery and hooliganism and other social vices have become the order of the day, education seems to be the only weapon that can be used to foster much

needed unity and peace to be able to move the nation forward politically, socially, culturally, and economically.

### **Roles of Citizenship Education in Economic Development in Nigeria**

We need Citizenship Education in our secondary schools because it seems to be one of the tools that can be used in bringing about positive changes in the socio – economic development of Nigeria. This explains why there are elements of Citizenship Education in many subjects such as English, History, Mathematics etc.

Similarly, several international agreements have emphasized and hammered on the need for Citizenship Education in our schools;

*“We, the ministers of Education (of the world) strive to pay special attention to Improving curricula, the contents of textbooks, and other education materials Including new technology with a view to educating, caring and responsible citizens committed to peace, human right, democracy and sustainable development open to other cultures, able to appreciate the value of freedom, respect for human dignity and differences and able to prevent conflicts or resolve them by non – violent means”.*

It is necessary to include at all levels, true education for citizenship which include an international dimension. Source: UNESCO Declaration and Integrated framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, 1995.

A viable society depends upon citizens who among other things are:

- a. aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens;
- b. informed about the social and political world;
- c. concerned about the welfare of others; and
- d. responsible in how they act as citizens.

These capacities do not develop unaided. They have to be learnt. While a certain amount of citizenship may be picked up through ordinary experience in the home or at work, it can never in itself be sufficient to equip citizens for the sort of active role required of them in our complex and diverse societies. Therefore, if citizens are to become genuinely involved in public life and affairs, a more explicit approach to Citizenship Education is required. This approach should be:

1. **Pervasive:** Not restricted to schools but an integral part of all education for young people.
2. **Inclusive:** Every young people must be entitled to it regardless of their ability or background.

On this note, Citizenship Education as pointed out by Democratic life seems to be the only subject that teaches about the way socio – economic process of a nation works.



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It is noteworthy to point out that our school system has provided international studies at the expense of national education Fafunwa (1974) notes that students in Nigeria know more about European people than Nigerians who belong to ethnic groups different from theirs. To create trust and confidence among Nigerians, Metzobi, Domike, and Osakwe (1996) opine that among Nigerian, it is necessary to provide Nigerians the type of education that is characterized by Nigerians intercultural education.

It has therefore become the norm of modern citizenship education to have a strong human rights value base, to make specific reference to children's right and address issues related to diversity and the rights of minority within society.

Citizenship Education, which is the major focus of Social Studies, has been used in many countries like USA for solving economic problems. Awosolu (1993) notes that this type of education can be used to prepare members of plural societies. And as Omare (1999) states, Citizenship Education trains the mind of the people in direction of what is required for a stable economy.

Citizenship Education analyzes man in all aspects of environments like Social Studies. It considers the socio – economic aspect of life as well as political, religious, cultural, and technological aspects.

According to Yusuf (2005), Citizenship Education, which has an important component of value education could serve as instrument for bringing about desirable positive economic change in the country.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

In this paper, it has been emphasized that Citizenship Education should be introduced and implemented fully in secondary school level and at all levels of our education system to purge pervasive nature of indiscipline in our secondary schools, which has affected greatly, the economic development of Nigeria as a nation. It is against this background that the following recommendation on the strategy for effective implementation of Citizenship Education are made.

- (i) Citizenship Education should be introduced at all levels of teacher training institutions as one of the core – courses. This is because teachers must be prepared and equipped to effect the needed change on the children since students of today, as said earlier in this paper, are the potential leaders of tomorrow and whatever kind of moral or immoral knowledge they receive at this level of education is what they will carry to the large society.

- (ii) For effective implementation, education should be made free and compulsory at least up to senior secondary school level. This is because students would have imbibed high degree of discipline and good citizenship before sitting for their final paper.

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