

ROLE OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN EXPLORING GOOD VALUES AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN IN NIGERIA

BY

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the concept, goals and role of citizenship education in exploring good values among school children. The paper also outlines the various challenges facing citizenship education as a school subject in Nigeria; and highlights some recommendations for the challenges facing the subject. Thus, it recommends among others that teachers of citizenship education should be role models for citizenship skills and virtues in their teaching and relationship with each other and their students. This will make the subject interesting and manifest in students and public as well.

Key words: Citizenship Education, School Children, Good values

Introduction

Citizenship Education is very essential subject at all levels of education, especially primary and secondary schools, for preparing young people to be good citizens of their local communities, as well as good citizens of the national community within which the local communities are nested. It acquaints the students and the general-public to be aware of their rights, duties and obligations as citizens of a country. It also helps to instill in the people a sense of belonging and participation in the community and the nation as a whole. Citizenship Education, therefore, involves a state of identity, entitlement to rights and enjoyment of rights and performing of duties and obligations. In many countries, the focus of the teaching is on 'active citizenship'. The purpose of "active citizenship" is to teach students to work together and take practical action, using their Citizenship knowledge and understanding to contribute to a better society. For example, after learning about human rights, diversity and inequality, students might decide to set up a project to address racism in their school or local community (Bluealbion, 2021).

Citizenship Education trains good citizens to be aware of the human and political issues at stake in their society or nation, it also requires from each citizen ethical and moral qualities. It further inculcates respect for others and recognition of the equality of all human being at combating all forms of discrimination (racist, gender-based,

religious, etc) by fostering the spirit of tolerance and among human beings (UNESCO, 2013).

Citizenship Education is that which teaches what it means to be a good citizen of a community his responsibilities in the society, his limitations and the fundamental rights he is supposed to enjoy as stipulated in the constitution. It also teaches why it is important for one to be patriotic to the country and love his fellow countrymen so that unity, progress and stability will be promoted. The idea of Citizenship Education involves rules of what a citizen might do such as voting and paying taxes and can refuse to do such as pledging allegiance (Usman & Japa, 2017).

Citizenship education inculcates in the people the society's basic beliefs and values as well as the people's culture and skills. It equips the youths with what the people view as important. It also inculcates in students their right and privileges as well as their duties as responsible citizens. It makes them to be socially and politically aware, and integrate them into the social life of their society as well as help them to acquire the skills and competences of their society. Citizenship education equips the youths with knowledge to

It makes one patriotic and enables one to participate actively in formulating views that would lead to national progress and development. It creates social and political awareness in the young people. Citizenship education develops in people the spirit of unity and peace while recognizing differences. It emphasizes common heritage and the reason why every citizen should be patriotic (Ukpong, n.d)

Citizenship Education has become an increasingly important means for countries to educate their citizens about their rights and responsibilities. Both governmental and nongovernmental institutions are involved in the process of citizenship education. Educational institutions, mass mobilization agencies and media agencies are by far the most powerful means of exploring citizenship education. That makes Citizenship Education today, a compulsory subject at basic and senior secondary schools as well as higher institutions of learning.

Concept of Citizenship Education

Citizenship Education is the process of educating children from early childhood, to become clear thinking and enlighten citizens who participate in decisions concerning society (UNESCO, 2013).Citizenship Education is education that provides the background knowledge necessary to create an ongoing stream of new citizens participating and engaging with the creation of a civilized society. For some students entering into a different society, citizenship education is much more than the education provided to native residents (McGuire, 2021).Citizenship Education is a conscious process of inculcating certain values, skills and attitudes that the society considers desirable and essential for his survival as a unit and for a country's institutional knowledge as well as the rule of law that agitates, social and human relationship that pose as citizenship education. (Mokwunye, cited in Umudjere, Okogu, & Osah,

(2016).Citizenship Education is the training that imparts knowledge and skills to persons with the aims of transforming them into good citizens. Citizenship Education can also mean the process of enlightening citizen on their rights, privileges and responsibilities. It could mean the type of education, which instills desirable values; attitudes; skills and knowledge in individuals to enable them participate actively in the affairs of their group or adjust functionally as good citizens (Chiders, 2020). Broadly, Citizenship Education can be regarded as the teaching and learning of ethical or moral education that instills in the minds of children and young people, which considered necessary for them to effectively function as citizens and, in the conduct of affairs of their local communities, national and international as well.

Goals of Citizenship Education

Umudjeret al, (2016) identified five goal of Citizenship Education as follows:

- a. To transmit cultural values and ethics, patriotic attitudes and attributes that pose as necessities for societal growth and development to individual students;
- b. To inculcate national consciousness and understanding of national social problems and prospects of the national economy to the individual students;
- c. To avail the prospects of patriotism and nationalism to the individual students;
- d. To ascertain the need of national cohesion and integration as well as citizens' role to play in nation-building to the individual students; and
- e. To create awareness of recent and contemporary trends and the rationale for participate and mobilization of the country's resources for the good of the citizens in the individual students.

Thus, the National Policy on Education (NPE), (2014) outlined the national educational goals, which directly have relevance to education for citizenship as:

- a. Development of the individual into a morally sound, patriotic and effective citizen;
- b. Total integration of the individual into an immediate community, the Nigerian society and the world;
- c. Provision of equal access to qualitative educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of education, within and outside the formal school system;
- d. The inculcation of national consciousness, values and national unity; and
- e. Development of appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society.

Role of Citizenship Education in Exploring Good Values among School Children

Crick (2000) identified the roles of Citizenship Education as: develops students' ability to participate in communities and wider society as informed, critical and responsible citizens; to work together and take practical action, using their citizenship knowledge and understanding to contribute to a better society. He noted that, citizenship is more than a subject. If taught well and tailored to societal needs, its skills, values will enhance

democratic life for all of us, both rights and responsibilities, belonging in school and radiating out.

Berry, (2020) has this to say, Citizenship Education brings education's institutional function of creating an informed electorate to the forefront in an interdisciplinary and historic way. It seeks to cut across all subject areas, integrating many skills and competences that will benefit students throughout their lives as individuals, community members, citizens, and professionals. Citizenship Education can transform society; more thoughtful and engaged citizens lead to a stronger and more just society.

Huddleston (2015) identified the following roles of Citizenship Education:

- i. It helps to equip young people to deal with situation of conflict and controversy knowledgeable and tolerantly;
- ii. It helps to equip them to understand the consequences of their action and those of the adult around them;
- iii. It helps pupils to learn how to recognize bias, evaluate argument, weigh evidence, look for alternative interpretation, view-points and sources of evidence; above all to give good reasons for the things they say and do; and to expect good reasons to be given by others; and
- iv. It helps to develop the ability in the students to analyze contemporary and emerging issues and to participate in action aimed at achieving a sustainable future for themselves and the society in general.

Therefore, Citizenship Education as a school subject helps to build good character and values such as decency, decorum, orderliness, honesty, contentment, selflessness, tolerance, respect for elders, respect for constituted authorities, and respect for law as well as respect for national identities through which peace and development will be realized. Citizenship Education acquaints students to become aware of their rights, duties and obligations as citizens of a country. It also helps to instill in the people a sense of belonging and participation in the state or nation.

Challenges of Citizenship Education as a School Subject

Citizenship Education as a school subject in Nigeria grapples with a number of challenges, which include:

1. Citizenship Education is introduced in Nigerian schools as a course in General Studies of Education (GSE) and not as a field of study that will professionally produce trained and skillful teachers that would effectively teach the subject. According to Ukpong (n.d) researches show that conferences were held in the 1980s on how to incorporate general studies (in which Citizenship Education is inclusive) into the curriculum of Nigerian Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics, but to no avail. Ibezim (2018) noted that it is known that Citizenship Education is being taught in various ways in institutions with the result that, the aims and objectives of Citizenship Education are

hardly realized. In some institutions, there are lecturers but nobody has graduated or specialized in the discipline (Citizenship Education). To this end, Citizenship Education is not offered as a discipline especially in our higher institutions of learning. Therefore, Citizenship Education needs to be taught as a discipline in our educational institutions to produce trained professional teachers to teach the subject effectively.

2.Negligence of government to ensure compliance in teaching the subject from all schools, especially primary and secondary schools, through the enforcement of supervisory team (Monitoring and Evaluation) from both Federal and State Ministries of Education and also Local Education Authorities. Lack of a sufficiently structured follow-up into schools weakens the subject status (Shannon in Jeffers, 2008).This is implies that if strong supervisory team is enforced from Ministries/Departments of Education to monitor and evaluate the teaching and learning of Citizenship Education in schools, there will be improvement in the performance of both teachers and the learners.

3.Citizenship Education as a new subject lacks relevant resources, such as textbooks and other instructional materials and professional bodies or unions that can regulate the proficiency of the teachers and the teaching and learning of Citizenship Education. As a new subject, Citizenship Education has no relevant resources and text for effective instructional delivery. (Edinyang, Eni & Basseyy, 2016).Shu'aibu, Idris & Tukur (2020) noted that, adequate relevant resources to teaching of Citizenship Education are either costly or in short of supply in most of our classrooms in Nigeria. Ibezim (2018) states that inadequate texts and other instructional materials militate against the effective teaching of Citizenship Education because the course is new as well as the lecturers. This means that, provision of adequate instructional resources will enhance the facilitation of teaching and learning the subject efficiently.

4.Ineffectiveness of teachers that teach Citizenship Education as role model for citizenship skills and virtues in their teaching and relationships with each other, including their students that will the subject interesting and manifesting in the students and the general public as well. In the words Edinyang, et al (2016), one major challenge of Citizenship Education is the dearth of professional citizenship teachers to teach the subject. Because there are no skillful teachers to handle and create students awareness to public issues as to avoid social problems. Brown in Ibezim (2018) maintains that any attempt in educational reform is only likely to be successful if teachers are both willing and able to accept the new idea about their work and able to implement them in their teaching. This implies that the effectiveness of teaching and learning any subject is largely depends on the quality of the teacher and his interest to teach the subject.

5.There is no adequate participation in community life through school representatives. Out-of-school visit, campaigns and community action projects will help the students to see themselves as active members of society, with a part to play in fostering citizenship skills to the community members. If there is active participation of the students and stakeholders in education in community affairs, citizenship skills will manifest and

remain in the minds of the students and young people in the society. Students learn develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of the community (Koliba, 2000).

6. There are no adequate awareness campaigns from relevant agencies on Citizenship Education such as National Orientation Agency (NOA) and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that can make individuals in the community respect the laws of the land and their fellow human beings. Ezenagu (2019) noted that, one major issue is that at grass root levels, the work involves changing the behaviour of the target population. This change has to be sustained so that even after NGO moves out of the intervention domain the change remains. In this context, government and private individuals need to supplement NGOs in their performances in order to retain the tempo.

Dattuwa (2017) stated that, one of the major challenges the NOA appears to be facing is that it exists virtually only at the centre. Its presence at states and local levels is relatively inconspicuous. Its states offices appear to be passive for obvious reasons. This means that the Agency is not effective in its deliverance especially at local levels. In spite of its objectives as promoting Nigeria's core values and positive attitudes programmes of value reorientation; and promoting a vibrant democratic culture and citizens responsibilities through political and civic education. Thus, if they appear to be function effectively, they would have been utilizing the available facilities they have (such as offices, vehicles computers, projectors and so on), to adequately perform their functions as public awareness campaigners and orientalisists.

Conclusion

From the content of this paper, it can be concluded that Citizenship Education, as a school subject is very fundamental aspect in national life in the production of sound and responsible citizens. Thus, Citizenship Education helps to inculcate in the students a set of knowledge and skills, which constitute values and attitudes for their own lives and that of local communities, as well as national and international community as a whole. Citizens are therefore, expected to use the knowledge and skills they have acquired through citizenship education for producing effective citizenry.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for the challenges facing Citizenship Education as a school subject in Nigeria:

- i. Citizenship Education should be offered as a field of study in Teacher Training Colleges and Universities, in order to produce trained and professional teachers in the subject, for teachers must be prepared and equipped to effect the needed change in the children;
- ii. Government should put more interest on Citizenship Education and ensure compliance in teaching the subject in all schools, especially at primary and secondary levels in the federation, through enforcement by supervisory team at

- both State and Federal Ministries of Education;
- iii. Teachers in the field and other professional bodies should put hands together to produce relevant textbooks to aid the teaching and learning of the Citizenship Education and look up to the proficiency of the teachers, the teaching and the learning of the subject.
 - iv. Teachers of Citizenship Education should be role models for citizenship skills and virtues in their teaching and relationships with each other and students. This will make the subject interesting and manifesting in the students and the general public as well;
 - v. Participation in community life through school representatives, out-of-school visit, campaigns and community action projects, will help the students to see themselves as active members of society, with a part to play in fostering citizenship skills to the community members; and
 - vi. Citizenship awareness campaign should be publicly conducted so that, the masses will live up to the expectation. This will make people to respect the laws of the land and respect their fellow human beings.

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