
CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND COHESION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Nigeria as a multicultural society is faced with the problems of tribalism, insecurity, corruption, political crisis, ethno-religious dichotomy weak institutions, bad leadership culminating into distrust among its constituents, an identity crisis that has threatened national integration and cohesion. All efforts at enthroning nationhood from amalgamation in 1914 to independence in 1960 up till now, seems not to be yielding the desired results owing to her policy and programme implementation pattern that is ethnic, religious and personality driven. This paper looked at the concept of citizenship education and its supposed role in building nationhood in Nigeria. It opines that the bond and role of citizenship has eluded Nigerians and thus should be reactivated, coupled with the enthronement of good, purposeful and inclusive leadership at all levels, which is hoped to re-awaken the consciousness and belief in one Nigeria among Nigerians.*

KEYWORDS: Citizen, Citizenship, Nationhood, Integration, Cohesion, Tribalism

INTRODUCTION

Most Nigerians have always wondered either in public or privately why nothing seems to work in the country. Indeed, an average Nigerian is always sceptical of every government initiative as he thinks that it will follow the same doomed path of failure just as others before it. It therefore becomes imperative to ask why the management of Nigeria's political, economic and social components of the system does not always produce the much-desired end result of improving the welfare and creating happiness for her citizenry. (Agbiti;2009). A country exists in order to realize the ultimate goal of nationhood, if not, it will serve two unintended, inevitable purposes of a mere contrivance convenient for the privileged class to exploit the system for personal gains without sparing a thought for how to improve it, and a breeding ground where hatred for the country is nurtured among the under- privileged class, owing largely to undelivered dreams and expectations from the system. This seems to be the true picture of the entity Nigeria, where majority have lost confidence in the nation and its leaders. Nigeria is yet to find its bearing as a country capable of fulfilling the purpose of its existence to its citizenry. It therefore requires a deliberate reorientation of her citizens on their roles, privileges and rights of individuals, which is the nucleus of citizenship education. An individual, ethnic or religious group alone cannot build a nation, rather it requires collective efforts. This can only be achieved through conscientization of the citizenry on their roles, rights, privileges, tolerance, appreciation, positive attitude and love for their country, that no one loves and can develop Nigeria better than Nigerians. Here lies the need of citizen education which equips individuals (youths and adults) with the knowledge, skills and understanding to play an active, effective part in society as informed, critical citizens who are socially and morally responsible, which is the focus of this paper.

Citizen and Citizenship

A citizen is a person who is entitled to enjoy all the legal rights and privileges granted by a state to the people comprising its constituency, and are obligated to obey its laws and to fulfil his duties as called upon. It is summarized as a legal member of a particular state or country. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) clearly states who is a Nigeria citizen in sections 25(1) & (2), 26(1), 27(1) & (2) and 31. Citizenship in Nigeria can be by birth, registration, naturalization conquest, and Government concession or conferment. A citizen is a person belonging to a particular society and furnished with knowledge of public affairs, instilled with attitudes of civic virtue and equipped with skills to participate in the public arena.

Citizenship refers to membership of a given state or nation. Citizenship is gained by meeting the legal requirements of a national, state, or local government. A nation grants certain rights and privileges to its citizens. In return, citizens are expected to obey their country's laws and defend it against its enemies. In Nigeria the constitution has also accorded some rights to all her citizens to be enjoyed and have to be protected by the State. They include Right to Life, Right to Dignity of Human Person, Right to Personal Liberty, Right to Fair Hearing, Right to Private and Family Life, Right to freedom of Thought, Right to Freedom of Expression and the Press, Right to Freedom of Movement, Right to Freedom from Discrimination and Right to Private Property. (FRN;2011). The value of citizenship varies from nation to nation.

Citizenship is based on three basic principles, consisting of social and moral responsibility, consisting of citizens learning from an early age to behave with self-confidence and in a socially and morally responsible way within and beyond the classroom, both to those in authority and towards each other as rights and duties. The second is community involvement, which is learning about becoming involved in the life and concerns of communities, including learning through community involvement and service to the community, and lastly, political literacy, consisting of learning about, and how to take part in and influence, public life through knowledge, skills and values on a national and local level. While the nation/state provides and protects citizens, they in turn have roles to play. Cook (1975) categorized the role of citizens into: -

- *Mandatory Prescribed (subject) Roles.* Sets of behaviour demanded of people in certain circumstances to abide by the decisions of the nation/state and/or community, the laws, rules of the game and traditions regardless of the preference of the incumbent.
- *Accepted Prescribed Roles:* Set of behaviours, taken on by people voluntarily or in exchange for some specific compensation, designed to perform tasks deemed helpful to the system. Incumbents have some choice of whether to accept the role or not, but once in it are expected to conform to the prescriptions provided by the system.
- *Autonomous (citizen) Roles:* Set of behaviours determined and directed by incumbents based on their judgment as to how to influence public affairs given their own circumstances and perceptions of the situations and patterns of the community systems.

While the Nigerian constitution (FRN; 2014) as amended stipulates the duties of her citizens to include: -

- Abide by this constitution, respect its ideals and its institutions, the National Flag, the National Anthem, the National Pledge, and legitimate authorities.
- Help to enhance the power, prestige and good name of Nigeria, defend Nigeria and render such national service as may be required.
- Respect the dignity of other citizens and the rights and legitimate interests of others and live in unity and harmony and in the spirit of common brotherhood.
- Make positive and useful contribution to the advancement, progress and well-being of the community where he resides.
- Render assistance to appropriate and lawful agencies in the maintenance of law and order; and
- Declare his income honestly to appropriate and lawful agencies and pay his tax promptly.

Nigeria's Quest for Nationhood

Nigeria with more than 500 ethnic groups, with varying languages and customs, creating a country of rich ethnic diversity have been in the search for nationhood. This has led leaders at various time to enact laws and development policies aimed at uniting her citizens. Some of these policies include Federalism Concept, (1954), Creation of more states, Land use degree Act, Nation building Policy (Federal character), establishment of Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, Revenue sharing formula, NYSC Scheme, (1973) Establishment of Unity Schools, Uniform Local Government System, Political Conference (2005), National Conference (2015), rotational presidency, zonal restructuring of the Nation (six Zones) etc. But all these have not yielded the desired fruits of integrating Nigerian but rather separate them more. However, ethnocentrism, tribalism, religious persecution, and prebendalism have affected Nigerian politics both prior and subsequent from independence (1960) to date. Kin-selective altruism has also made its way into Nigerian politics, resulting in tribalism efforts to concentrate Federal power to a particular region of their interests. This has led to the alienation of the people from the government, where they are left to care for themselves leading to ethnic nationalism and secessionist movement with movements such as MASSOB, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Odua People's Congress, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, Arewa Consultative Forum etc. Nigeria's three largest ethnic groups (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) have maintained historical pre-eminence in Nigerian politics and competition amongst these three groups has fuelled corruption, distrust and graft and marginalization real and perceived. Policies that would have moved and increase trust, cohesion and nationhood have been designed, but, the 'Hamithic Concept', of "can anything good come of Nazareth", has always rear up its hydra headed monster than looks at the policy initiator (his person, religion, tribe and political affiliation) rather than the merit of the policy, either to support or oppose. This has made policies and ideas that would have integrated Nigerians not to work.

Building a nation depends on the citizens, thus Thomas Jefferson, former American president, while acknowledging the importance of the people, said 'I know of no safe repository of the ultimate power of society, but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform that discretion by education. (Newsatch;2001). Thus, education is a critical

instrument for reforming people to be better citizens that will contribute to the development of their country.

The Nigerian situation is the direct opposite, with an increasing illiterate population. The average Nigerian has been ostracized, deprived from education and excluded purposely from the political and economic space, negating the spirit of its own constitution. How then will integration, cohesion and nationhood be achieved? Illiteracy breeds ignorance leading to miscommunication, distrust and suspicion and ultimately rivalry. Onifade & Imhonopi (2013) summarized it as inter and intra community, religious and ethnic strife. Acts that have widen and deepen the gulf of separation within the nation.

Citizenship Education

Citizenship education is about enabling people to make their own decisions and to take responsibility for their own lives and communities. It is the process of educating children, from early childhood, to become clear-thinking and enlightened adult's citizens who participate in decisions concerning their society. (UNESCO;1998) 'Society' here refers the special sense of a nation with a circumscribed territory which is recognized as a state. Individuals having knowledge of the nation's institutions, and an awareness that the rule of law applies to social and human relationships, forms an integral part of citizenship education. Therefore, citizenship education is based on the distinction between: the individual as a subject of ethics and law, entitled to all the rights inherent in the human condition (human rights); and the citizen who is entitled to the civil and political rights recognized by the national constitution of the country.

It consists of a set of educational practices and activities aimed at making citizens (young and adults) to be better equipped to participate actively in democratic life by assuming and exercising their rights and responsibilities in society. It is learning about living together in the society. Citizenship education focuses on children's social development and understanding of society and the wider world, helping them to see themselves as members of society; developing their understanding of democracy, diversity, social justice, fairness, rights and responsibilities; and learning to contribute positively to their communities and to democratic and public life. (Moorse;2012). But Anumba;(2013), sees it as education for citizenship, which is socializing the youths against all form of antisocial behaviour within the society and inculcating in them virtues that promote respect, dignity of labour and other positive values that helps promote a strong, self-sustaining and reliable nation. Citizenship education involves a wide range of different elements of learning, including:

- *Knowledge and understanding:* About topics such as: laws and rules, the democratic process, the media, human rights, diversity, money and the economy, sustainable development and world as a global community; and about concepts such as democracy, justice, equality, freedom, authority and the rule of law;
- *Skills and aptitudes:* Critical thinking, analysing information, expressing opinions, taking part in discussions and debates, negotiating, conflict resolution and participating in community action;
- *Values and dispositions:* Respect for justice, democracy and the rule of law, openness, tolerance, courage to defend a point of view and willingness to: listen to, work with and stand up for others.

Citizenship education is synonymous with democracy. Democracy depend upon citizens who, among other things, are aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens; informed about the social and political world; concerned about the welfare of others; articulate in their opinions and arguments. They are also capable of having an influence on the world and been active in their communities; and responsible in how they act as citizens. But these capacities do not develop unaided. They have to be learnt. While a certain amount of citizenship may be acquired through ordinary experience at home or work, it can never be sufficient to equip citizens for the active role required of them in today's complex and diverse society. It therefore requires the inclusion into the school curriculum as a subject to be taught the children.

The scope of Citizenship Education, covers understanding and handling diversity, tolerance, having and handling opinions., critical attitude and tools, Conflict resolution, Commitment to the human environment, community participation, democratic participation, democracy and autocracy, cooperation and conflict, equality and diversity, fairness, justice, the rule of law, rules, law and human rights, freedom and order, individual and community, power and authority, rights and responsibilities. It can be summarized into

- educating people in citizenship and human rights through an understanding of the principles and institutions which govern a state or nation,
- learning to exercise one's judgment and critical faculty; and
- the acquiring of a sense of individual and community responsibilities.

All these are targeted at making citizens more responsible and functional in the society by educating the individual as a subject of ethics and law, and to educating citizens with the following themes.

- The relations between individuals and society: individual and collective freedoms, and rejection of any kind of discrimination.
- The relations between citizens and the government: what is involved in democracy and the organization of the state.
- The relations between the citizen and democratic life.
- The responsibility of the individual and the citizen in the international community.

Citizenship education therefore has to be Inclusive: An entitlement for all young people regardless of their ability or background; Pervasive: Not limited to schools but an integral part of all education for young people; and Lifelong: Continuing throughout life.

National Integration and Cohesion

National integration describes the togetherness or oneness felt by citizens of a country with regard to citizenship. When individuals are nationally integrated, they may feel a sense of pride or patriotism. National integration isn't only about national spirit. It involves a feeling that brings peoples from all areas, dialects and beliefs together in a common endeavour. When national integration occurs, individuals are likely to work together to build systems that enhance the prosperity of a nation and its people. National integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. It means that though we belong to different

tribes, religions and regions and speak different languages we recognize the fact that we are all one. This kind of integration is very important in the building of a strong and prosperous nation. Its engineer's unity in spite of great differences, promoting unity in diversity. National integration means creating a mental outlook which will prompt and inspire every person to place loyalty to the country above group loyalties and the welfare of the country above narrower sectarian interests. National integration is a positive aspect that reduces socio-cultural and economic differences or inequalities and strengthens national unity and solidarity, which is not imposed by any authority. People share ideas, values and emotional bonds. It is feeling of unity within diversity where National identity is supreme. Cultural unity, constitution territorial continuity, common economic problems, art, literature, national festivals, national flag, national anthem and national emblem etc promote National Integration

National cohesion entails the process of working towards the well-being of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization and entails fostering cohesion by building networks of relationships, trust and identity between different groups, fighting discrimination, exclusion and excessive inequalities, and enabling upward social mobility), (OECD 2011). It is the set of social processes that help instil in individuals the sense of belonging to the same community and the feeling that they are recognized as members of the community. It is the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding polarization. A cohesive society is a mutually supportive community of free individuals pursuing these common goals by democratic means. Norton & De Haan, (2013), noted that social consensus on norms and values that promote national social cohesion includes Social membership/national citizenship, Fairness and equity and security of access to livelihoods and basic services. The role of the state is critical in these three issues: it legitimizes national membership/citizenship (and the conditions of access for outsiders), and it embodies national norms around fairness and to different degrees ensures individuals/household access to basic livelihoods and services.

Therefore, national integration and cohesion is in the hands of the state and how her affairs are handled and operated. Inclusiveness will promote integration and cohesion, while exclusiveness will promote disintegration and ethnic/religious rivalry. National social cohesion describes the nature and quality of relationships across people and groups in society, including the state. The constituency of national cohesion is complex, but it implies a convergence across groups in society that provides a framework within which groups can, at a minimum, coexist peacefully. In this way cohesion offers a measure of predictability to interactions across people and groups, which in turn provides incentives for collective action. (World Bank 2012).

There are many forces that come in the way of our (Nigeria) national integration and cohesion, which include language, religion, and communalism, among others. In Nigeria factors that inhibit national integration and cohesion spans from corruption to weak institution, selfishness, bad leadership that has led to disaffection among ethnic nationalities in the country and increase in poverty, hunger, illiteracy, unemployment, marginalization, infrastructural decay, homelessness and lack of access to quality health. Imhonopi & Urim (2012) argue that federalism as it is presently practiced in Nigeria has failed to guarantee national integration on one hand and yet fails to guarantee local rule on the other hand. The only way out of the woods for Nigeria is to re-orientate her citizens that have lost faith in the nation through citizenship education.

Citizenship Education Role in National Cohesion/Integration

Citizenship Education boosts political engagement and young people who have experienced good citizenship education in and beyond school have more positive attitudes towards voting and other political activities. Citizenship education gives pupils the knowledge, skills and understanding to play an effective role in society at local, national and international levels. It helps them to become informed, thoughtful and responsible citizens who are aware of their rights and, subsequently, conscious of their duties. Citizenship education promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, making students more self-confident and responsible both in and beyond the classroom. It helps pupils to play a part in the life of their schools, neighbourhoods, communities and the wider world. It also encourages learning about the economy democratic institutions and values; different national, religious and ethnic identities; and the development of students' abilities to reflect on issues and take part in discussions. Citizenship education will develop in individual skills, attitudes and values that will enable them to show concern for the wellbeing and dignity of others, respecting the worth of others and approaching civil decision in a rational manner.

The central goal of citizenship education is to orient a citizen to possess the necessary minimum knowledge about the mechanism of democracy. This citizen is expected also to be convinced of the values and advantages of a democratic life and acquire the qualities of an independent, critical-minded person. Other goals of citizenship education to empower individuals include: -

- *Common good.* It inculcates obligation to contribute to the common good of society as one of its fundamental principles. The concept of the common good means that the political community has some set of values. These values and interests are significant for all members of the community.
- *Freedom.* It's one of the strongest human desires. Having freedom, a person implement plans, makes independent choice of life goals and choice of ways to achieve them.
- *Equality.* It consists of political and social equality, which is equality of opportunity to achieve individual and collective goals. The result of political aspirations will still be different depending on individual abilities and inclinations. Social equality speaks of the absence of the classes and privileges in society, but rather rights.
- *Truth.* Citizens need to know what is happening in the state. They have the right to demand from officials an account of their activities, their money spent, decisions taken and for them also to be sincere with all performing their functions.
- *Political knowledge.* It helps to understand the functioning mechanism of modern democracy. Rights to knowledge gives an idea of the fundamentals of the constitutional system, as well as rights and freedoms specified in the constitution.
- *Sociological knowledge.* This is the understanding of the structure of society, its norms and values, problems of social development. It also allows us to understand our place in the society, the complexities of social relations, family, education, culture, age and gender differentiation.

- *Historical knowledge.* Knowledge of history helps to understand the present and plan the future. In the process of civic education, a person receives certain knowledge, forms some value preferences, acquires quite certain personal qualities.

The present-day modern education requires the schools to cater for children and individuals from different cultural backgrounds. This cultural heterogeneity is an opportunity for citizenship education to explore. Children are thus encouraged to mingle with, learn about and understand cultures other than their own. Far from blurring the cultural diversity of pupils, citizenship education can bring out the value of differences while respecting and affirming the universality of human rights principles. Respect for others is a universal principle, which means that, in the daily life of the school, a dialogue with others, and taking an interest in other family lifestyles, social habits and cultural practices should be encouraged. Citizenship education is the ideal forum, since discussion on social issues can be organized so that opinions can be expressed on ways of looking at the world, in other words, on cultures. Thus, citizenship education in our school system is expected to inculcate national moral values and develop a truly patriotic citizen whose consciousness will transcend its ethnic boundary, and as a consequence produce an educated citizen, who knows his duties to his country at this trying period of our national history

Way Forward

As a multicultural society, it is imperative that achieving national integration and cohesion requires taking deliberate steps to ensure inclusiveness. Some of these include: -

- Our educational system should be strengthened and tailored to reflect on our core values that promote unity, respect for individual rights and privileges rather than alien values that breeds hatred and distrust.
- Policies should be formulated and implemented holistically promoting inclusiveness and not exclusiveness through selected implementation.
- Strong institutions should be built around laws and operational guidelines and principles and not around people.
- The Leadership recruitment process should be improved to create room for those prepared to lead, so that selfish, greedy and ethno-religious centred person will be sifted out.
- Democracy should be operated with a human face of inclusiveness protecting human rights and allowing the people choose their leaders.

CONCLUSION

Nation-building requires inculcating a uniform consciousness among its various constituents with their cultural, historical, linguistic and territorial diversities, aimed at evolving a common identity, where an individual, as a member of a sovereign entity has imbibed a sense of belonging and commitment to the realization or sustenance to the ideals of the system. Every country exists in order to realize the ultimate goal of nationhood and Nigeria should not be an

exception. Nationhood may appear to be unrealistic and there may be a collective grope, yet Nigeria has not drifted to an extent where it cannot be rescued from the jaws of disintegration. But it requires a conscious effort by the leaders at all level and the followers to change bearing and trust one another operating within the confines of "all for each, each for all".

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