

INTENSIVE CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: A CURE FOR THE MOUNTING MORAL FAULTS AMONG YOUTHS

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria's social life is characterized by moral faults, naked greed, dishonesty and corruption even among the youths. This paper therefore calls for an intensive citizenship education for them. This education is the deliberate inculcation of social and cultural attitudes, knowledge and skills that enable individuals to become socially and politically integrated within the society. The focus of such education should be the constitution, government and politics, national symbols, political leadership and followership, local and state structures, discipline in national life, constituted authority, human rights use, care of public property, traditional institutions, and the rights, obligations and duties of citizens. The paper cautions the youths to shun vices and learn to serve, care for, share with as well as invest in others. They should seek what they can do for the country and not what the country can do for them.

Keywords: Citizens, Duties, Indiscipline, Indices, Responsibilities

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country known for its many paradoxes. Overall, the country has the potential to build a prosperous economy, reduce poverty significantly and provide basic social and economic services its population needs (African Peer Review Mechanism [APRM], 2008). The country is Africa's most populated country and one-sixth of the world's black nation, the 8th largest oil-producer and has the 6th largest deposit of natural gas in the world. Despite its plentiful resources and oil wealth, Nigeria's wealth has been criminally mismanaged such that widespread poverty is the common thread interlocking majority of its ethnic groups. In 2006, it was estimated that about 70 percent of the over 140 million people in Nigeria lived below the survival line of one US dollar a day, with 35 percent in absolute poverty (Onuoha, 2008).

Nigeria is a multicultural society. Thus, ethnicity serves as an instrument of differentiation amongst multicultural groups as a link amongst people of the same group, literate or illiterate (Otite, 2002). It appears, in this connection that the existing current advanced forms of Western Education have not succeeded in removing the divisive and discriminatory practices of ethnicity in Nigeria's multicultural society. There are several moral faults in Nigeria's social life. Naked greed, dishonesty and corruption have become "virtues" in Nigeria.

It would be merely overstressing the obvious to mention that Nigeria is a corrupt nation. That Nigeria is a country with a dirty record of unmitigated incidents of bribery, nepotism, naira trafficking, smuggling, avarice, graft, unbridled sexual promiscuity, favouritism, embezzlement of public funds, willful destruction of public property, electoral malpractices and a host of other striking malpractices, is an indisputable fact. These cankerworms have been so shamelessly associated with the social fabrics of this nation, a nation that is supposed to be the giant of other African nations. (Udiugwomen, 2006). The impact of corruption is so rampant and has earned Nigeria a very bad image at home and abroad. Besides, it has distorted and retrogressed development. Apart from corruption, ethnicity is at work in Nigeria. Under multinationalism, the phenomenon of ethnicity is used as an instrument for the struggle for privileges and opportunities.

Ethnicity refers to the personal or group exploitation of a collective consciousness of difference identity and exclusiveness strengthened by symbols, with inherent

phenomena of conflict and discrimination against the non-members in situations of social crises and competition over commonly valued political and economic resources (Otite, 2002). According to this author ethnicity, corruption, weak sectional leadership self-centred materialism, misgovernment or too-much government, privatization of state resources are some of the problems of social and politics-economic development in Nigeria. Ethnicism is one of those serious problems that challenge the nationhood project, not only in Nigeria but in Africa as a whole. Its incorporation into the body-politics of Nigeria was responsible for the collapse of the First Republic and the series of crises that snowballed the country into a bloody civil war of 1967 (Jonah, 2014).

Indiscipline appears to be endemic in our school system now more than ever before, especially amongst our secondary school students. Our newspapers and magazines are awash with several incidents involving students in a variety of disciplinary behaviours. Acts of indiscipline can be classified generally into 5 groups:

- Moral indiscipline: sexual offences and deceit.
- Personal indiscipline: rudeness and disobedience
- Safety indiscipline: smoking of cigarette, marijuana, bullying and possession of dangerous weapons such as guns, knives, daggers etc.
- Legal indiscipline: assault on teachers, fighting and falsification of records e.g. school results.
- Educational indiscipline: truancy, skipping classes, examination malpractice etc. (Fan, 2014).

The following are only a few of the best known and most often encountered ones in our schools.

- Stealing: from parents, neighbours, other students of school property, school fees given to children by parents/guardians.
- Dishonesty: falsifying examination reports, cheating in examination, impersonation, examination malpractice, forging of principal/teacher's signatures, forging of parent's signature, use of ATM card to withdraw money from parent's accounts.
- Sexual offences: heterosexuality, homosexuality (gay), possession of pornographic materials, nude pictures, masturbation, gang-raping, browsing of pornographic films in internet etc. The consequences of sexual offences include - venereal diseases (STD, HIV/AIDS), teenage

pregnancy, crude abortion that sometimes results in the death of victims.

- Disobedience: flagrant disobedience of specific orders, wearing wrong school uniform, refusal to do class assignments, coming late to school, etc.
- Truancy: absenteeism, lateness, leaving school without permission, dodging specific school periods, malingering (to avoid working by pretending to be ill).
- Assault and insult/physical brutality: beating up fellow students, fighting members of staff, bullying, vandalization of school property, roughness at games etc.
- Drug offences: smoking cigarettes, marijuana (Indian hemp), keeping and taking abortion drugs, drinking of alcohol and even human blood.
- Wickedness: oppression of junior students, fagging (using junior students to do jobs for senior students), willful destruction of junior students' property, destruction of school property etc.
- Suicide: death arising from a deliberate act of self-destruction for examination failure, academic frustration, loss of friendship, loneliness, etc.
- Strikes and mass demonstration for food, facilities, etc.
- Gang warfare: burglary, killing, thurggry, acid bath on persons who are targets and other barbaric activities.
- Poor appearance: failing to wear correct school uniform, finger painting, use of cosmetics and wrong dressing, flying of shirts and shirt collars, special hair cut, wearing of earrings and chains, skin tattoo etc.
- Charms: making charms/concoctions to pass examinations or bind other students in examination room, win love of girls, get favour from teachers etc.
- Secrets Society: getting involved in membership of secret societies/cult groups, clubs etc.
- Noise: noise making with radio, handsets, stereo sets and disturbing the academic atmosphere, loitering etc.

The high incidence of recurrence of indisciplined acts in schools has become a source of concern to parents, teachers, school administration, government and the society in general. This paper forwards "citizenship education" as a strategy to revert this trend.

What is citizenship education?

Citizenship education in England has been included for the first time ever as an explicit part of the school curriculum in England from September, 2002. The National Curriculum for Citizenship in England contributes to the overall aims of the National Curriculum: those children should develop as successful learners and confident individuals.

Citizenship is a relationship between an individual and a state involving the individual's full political membership in the state and his permanent allegiance to it. This implies full membership in a country. It is the special status given to citizens which entitle them to enjoy certain privileges and at the same time expects them to carry out certain responsibilities (Fan, 2014). It is a state of being vested with the rights of a citizen. Citizens are to the body-politic what cells are to the natural body. For instance, the cell wall gives shape, protection and mechanical support to the cell and cell membrane helps in the selective absorption of materials. A cell is a "single unit" of a living organism. The education of the citizens about their places in nation building is therefore essential. The task in citizenship education is to help children to be socially sensitive, socially responsible and socially intelligent members of their total school community and of their school sub-communities, with extensions, whenever possible, into the community beyond their schools.

Citizenship education is therefore 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. Nuhu (2011) submits that citizenship education is that training which produces the desirable values and virtues of the nation in learners and helps to shape their attitudes towards making positive contributions to the building and development of the nation. In the same vein, Onipe (2002) maintains that citizenship education is the deliberate inculcation of social and cultural attitudes, knowledge and skills that enable individuals to become socially and politically integrated within the society. The goals are:

- Showing concern for the well-being and dignity of others, respecting the worth of others;
- Supporting just laws and rights of all citizens;
- Knowing the main functions and structure of our government, from local to national level;
- Participating in democratic civic government;
- Understanding important world, national, local and civic problems;
- Approaching civic decisions in a rational manner;
- Helping and respecting one's family especially in these days of youth emancipation that borders on insubordination to parents and other adults (Osakwe, 1993). Citizenship education thereby creates among the citizens an awareness of their fundamental rights, enhances literacy on political issues, teaches social values and exposes the students to the role of government. This ultimately leads to national integration.

Ways of acquiring Nigerian citizenship

The commonest ways in which a person could become a citizen of Nigeria as stipulated in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria are:

1. Birth:
 - a. Every person born in Nigeria before the date of Independence, either of whose parents or any of those grandparents belongs to a community indigenous to Nigeria.
 - b. Every person born in Nigeria after the date of Independence, either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria and
 - c. Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria.
2. Registration. Any woman who is or has been married to a citizen of Nigeria, or any person of full age and capacity born outside Nigeria any of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria, if the President is satisfied that:
 - a. He is a person of good character;
 - b. He has shown clear intention of his desire to be domiciled in Nigeria and
 - c. He has taken the oath of allegiance as prescribed by the Constitution.
3. Naturalization: This is the process by which an individual may voluntarily change his citizenship of a state to another state. In Nigeria, no person shall be qualified to apply for the grant to a certificate of Naturalization, unless he has satisfied the president that:
 - a. He is a person of full age and capacity;
 - b. He is a person of good character
 - c. He has shown a clear intention to be domiciled in Nigeria:
 - d. He is, in the opinion of the Governor of the state where he or she proposes to be resident, acceptable to the local community in which he is to live permanently, and has been assimilated into the way of life of Nigerians in that part of the Federation.
 - e. He is a person who has made or is capable of making useful contributions to the advancement, progress and well-being of Nigerians;
 - f. He has taken the Oath of Allegiance as prescribed in the Constitution. It must be pointed out that the Nigerian Constitution strictly forbids or avoids dual citizenship as the certificate of registration or

naturalization of anyone who acquires the citizenship of any other country is to be immediately revoked. It is only citizenship by birth that gives the individual full rights of citizenship without strings. Granting citizenship through registration or naturalization is very conditional and the citizenship can easily be withdrawn if the person breaks the conditions.

Duties and responsibilities of citizens

Three types of citizens may be found in any country or place: the active or good citizen, the passive citizen and the bad citizen. An active or good citizen is one who tries to keep the laws of his society and works for the progress, peace, order and good government. He tries to make others behave like him, and does his best to develop enviable qualities or virtues which are necessary for co-operative and interdependent life in a social community. He is honest and has real love for his country. He is patriotic. The bad and passive citizens do not contribute positively to the development of the society.

The duties and responsibilities of the citizens are those minimum requirements which will ensure the stability and orderliness of the government and its survival as a heritage to future generations. While the state provides rights and liberties, all citizens have duties and responsibilities to the State. This means that whereas the state has conferred certain rights on its citizens, it has also imposed on them certain duties and responsibilities. These duties and responsibilities are:

- Loyalty to the country: The citizen's primary duty is that of allegiance or loyalty to the community to which he/she belongs. If citizens do not accept this duty of allegiance, the state can fall apart and cease to exist.
- Obedience to law: Citizens have a duty to obey the law and to uphold the order of the society. They must also be ready to assist the law enforcement officers by reporting breaches of the law and giving them any useful information they may have.
- Payment of taxes, rates and dues: One of the popular duties and responsibilities of the citizen is the payment of taxes. Without finance, an effective government would soon come to an end.
- Defence: The citizen has a duty to the defence of his community in times of war. He must serve in the army when military service is compulsory and defend the country in case of war.
- Helping in community development efforts: The citizen has a duty to help in community development efforts. This is because the government cannot pledge to provide everything for the people due to its lean financial position and other constraints.
- Helping to prevent crime: The citizen is not only required to avoid crime, he is also obliged to prevent the commission of crime. If anybody is destroying public property, stealing any property belonging to any person, persons or government, or community, it is the duty and responsibility of any citizen around the scene to ensure that the crime is not committed. If the crime has been committed, it is equally his duty to help the police arrest the criminal.
- Refraining from uttering destructive criticisms: A good citizen must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives of government policies. He should not stir up racial or class division within the state which may lead to bloodshed or chaos.
- Respect for the right of others: A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community. He must not interfere with the property of other persons.
- Participation in the political process: Every citizen is obliged to participate in the political process in the country or his community.

- Performance of an honest day's work: A good citizen must make his personal contributions to the advancement of his nation. In order to ensure this contribution, every citizen is obliged to seek an honest means of livelihood.

Indices of citizenship education in schools

- Proper information about the society: Citizenship education helps the citizen to know the cultural norms and social values which his society cherishes and upholds. It also helps the citizen to see the differences between his social values and those of other people.
- Knowledge about how the country is governed: Citizenship education helps the citizens to be familiar with the political administrative systems in his country. This embraces knowledge of the various arms and levels of government in the country; the way they function, political parties, administrative system, laws and the legal system.
- Ways of political participation: This helps pupils to know the various ways through which they can participate in the political process in their country. In the classroom, pupils are encouraged to express their views or opinions when anything is being discussed regarding general welfare, events and issues in the school. They are also encouraged and enabled to elect their prefect, and express their opinion on students; learn to express their opinion through the press and take part in elections as they grow up.
- Loyalty and obedience to law: Citizenship Education helps students to appreciate the need for being loyal and obedient to the laws of the state. They are also helped to know the consequences of disobedience to law.
- Maintenance of law and order: Citizenship education enables the child to understand that he is expected to help in the maintenance of law and order in the society. He is also made to realize that he should help to prevent crime, and help the police in the arrest of criminals where he possesses vital information to this effect.
- Allegiance to the nation and respect for a constituted authority: Citizenship education helps a student to realize that he has to pay allegiance to the nation by doing whatever the nation says he should. The study also helps a student to respect all constituted authorities in the family, the school, the community, in any organization or group and in the nation, at large.
- Knowledge of civic rights and privileges: Citizenship education helps a student to know his fundamental rights and privileges as guaranteed him under the Constitution. The course also helps a student to seek redress through the law court when these rights are denied him. In this way, he has come to understand that while seeking these rights he should not infringe upon those of others.
- Responsibility, good leadership and followership: Citizenship education helps a student to know that everybody cannot be a leader; somebody must have to lead while others follow. Both the leader and follower have their duties to perform and must be responsive to such duties.
- Respect for public property: Through citizenship education, a child understands that public property should be cared for, protected and preserved, just as personal property.
- Payment of taxes, rates and dues. Citizenship education helps a child to understand the need for the payment of taxes, rates and dues in the society.
- Co-operation and participation in the society: Citizenship education helps the child to know the importance of co-operation in human life and how he can co-operate in the family, the neighbourhood, the school and in the society, at large.

- National consciousness and patriotism: Citizenship education helps the child to understand the concept of national consciousness, patriotism and their implications.
- Honest service and dedication to duty: Citizenship education helps the child to appreciate the need for honesty, hard work and dedication to duty. He is equally helped to abhor laziness, dishonesty, cheating and malingering on duty. Good sense of judgment and moral values: Citizenship education helps the child to develop and apply moral values as well as develop a sense of right judgment based on available evidence and objectivity.
- Environmental sanitation: Citizenship education helps the child to understand the importance or value of a clean environment (Fan, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Citizenship education basically seeks to gain young people's support of the nation's civic culture through a variety of educational processes that deal with the cognitive and effective development of the learner. Children and young people need to be taught the perceived norms of their society and culture. Citizenship education should also help produce citizens who are effective and useful participants in the affairs of their environment from local to the international scene. It should be a means of bringing political, economic and social realities to young people. Nigeria is in a democratic setting. Therefore citizenship education must have as its central aim the teaching of those duties and responsibilities which must accompany the rights and privileges of citizens in a democracy. Citizenship education is essentially preparing a child for social responsibility so governments at all levels should embrace it with the commitment it deserves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper finds the following recommendations apposite:

- Governments, Federal, State and Local should invest more in educating the youths.
- Education is the aggregate of all the process by which a child and young adult develop the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which they live. One cannot transform the society until one transforms the intellect.
- Parents should serve as role models to their children and spend quality time with them for purposes of understanding their aspirations as well as problems. Parents may respond to their children either effectively or ineffectively. Effective parents accurately attend to their children's biological and emotional needs, giving them food when they are crying from hunger and comfort when they are crying out of fear. Ineffective parents, by contrast, fail to attend to their children's needs, deciding that their children are hungry, cold or tired without correctly interpreting the children's actual conditions. They may feed the children at times of anxiety rather than hunger, or comfort them at times of tiredness rather than anxiety. Children who receive such parenting, Comer (2007) posits, may grow up confused and unaware of their own internal needs, not knowing for themselves when they are hungry or full and unable to identify their own emotions.
- Teaching citizenship skills should involve teaching young people a sense of belonging to their local and national communities. Our youths must be made to care, feel and identify in certain ways with our society, goals and aspirations.
- Children should be made to realize that they are capable of participating directly in the activities of adult society by being made to internalize positive attitudes, basic skills and social values necessary for nation-building (Fan, Odidi & Usoroh, 2014). After all, moral maturity is a mark of human development (Fan, Usoroh & Umoetok, 2012).

- The focus of citizenship education should be the constitution, government and politics, national symbols, political leadership and followership, local and state structures, discipline in national life, constituted authority, human rights, use and care of public property, traditional institutions and the rights, obligations and duties of citizens.
- The Federal Government of Nigeria should evolve machinery for the distribution of wealth for the present gap between the rich and the poor is yawning.
- Teachers should be aware of the importance of a healthy interpersonal relationship with their students (Fan, 2012).
- Young people should forget about the pains of today and hope for a better tomorrow. They should engage themselves in gainful activities instead of social vices and learn to serve, care for, share with, as well as invest in others (Fan, 2002). They should ask what they can do for the country and not what the country can do for them.
- Fan, Jerry and Nnaraonye (2014) submit that basic tenets of various religions should be built into moral and religious instructions and made a core subject at this level, nation-wide.

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Both the authors have contributed equally.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Declared none

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