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**Creating Effective Citizenship through Implementation of
Citizenship Education in Secondary Schools: A Panacea for
Good Governance in Nigeria**

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Abstract

Good governance has continued to be a mirage in Nigeria polity. Nigeria as a nation has been bedeviled with bad leadership and therefore missed opportunities since independence in 1960 to join the league of great nations of the world. Successive governments have not been sincere in the

management of our national resources and treasuries in a manner that has resulted in unthinkable colossal loss of lives and opportunities for development and socio-economic advancement. The reason for this is not farfetched, some Nigerians are not effective citizens. Effective citizens must be created if we must have good governance and sustainable development. This can only be made possible if citizenship education in primary and secondary school curriculum is sincerely implemented. This paper examines the concepts of citizenship, citizenship education and good governance. It highlighted some factors that promote good governance and strategies of implementing citizenship education in Nigeria as a panacea to good governance in Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria as a nation has been laden with bad leadership and missed opportunities since her independence in 1960 to achieve self-reliance. The absence of transparency and accountability has continued to militate against good governance in Nigeria political leadership. Without defeating corruption and other financial crimes, our national wealth will continue to be carried away by unscrupulous politicians. The root of the matter is that most Nigerians are not effective citizens; effective citizens can only be made possible through implementation of citizenship education in Nigerian school curriculum.

There is evidence from empirical studies to support the thinking that citizens are made but not born. This is because societies that want to ensure their continuity have to socialize their citizens towards the achievement of their national goals. Easton and Dennis (2000) suggest that nations have to make deliberate efforts to ensure the creation of effective citizens who will in turn create a viable political system. However, the process of creating effective citizens in any nation takes a lot of time. This is why it is necessary that children are exposed to the very basic political socialization as provided in citizenship education curriculum in Nigerian schools. Okafor (2010) asserts that if children are exposed to political education in their formative age, they may grow up into adults who have internalized their basic civic obligations.

The ultimate purpose of citizenship education in Nigeria school curriculum is political socialization. It is hoped that it will help in the development of citizens that will take over from the present crop of leaders that haven't lost bearing in the art of governance for the attainment of sustainable development.

Conceptual Explanations

Citizenship

According to Okafor (2008), a citizen could be defined as National of a particular country; that is indigene of a particular nation. What qualifies one to be a citizen of a particular country however, varies from country to country. The concept of citizenship is significant as it confers some rights and privileges as well as some obligations to obey the laws of the land.

Citizenship Education

The concept of citizenship education is variously defined. It means different things to different people in ordinary conversation. Mezieobi (1992:92) states that citizenship education is a concept that defies any precise definition. For him, citizenship education refers to the educative means in a sovereign state whereby the citizens or individuals become socially integrated into the social milieu, acquire skills and competencies, become socially sensitive and actively participate in their social responsibility for maximum productivity and development. For Ezegebe (1988:122), citizenship education is that education through which people 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 positive and active roles in the society. Okafor (2008), sees citizenship education as the preparation of citizens for voluntary and spontaneous participation in his social and political responsibilities in the society.

Concept of Citizenship

Characteristics of an Effective Citizen

Easton and Dennis (2000) identified four major characteristics of a good citizen. These include a knowledge of certain amount of politics and recognition that such knowledge is important, a believe that the citizen can influence the course of political events; a belief in the fact that government will be fair in all her dealings; and lastly, the citizen is expected to hold both political institutions and actors in certain regards. Okafor (2010) believes that the effective citizen is that who has internalized some components of citizenship qualities such as participation, discussion and voting among others.

Esheya (2006), sees effective citizen as individual who is proud of the nation, nationally conscious, self reliant, disciplined, loyal and patriotic.

Good governance

Governance is the exercise of political authority and the use of institutional resources to manage society's problems and affairs. According to Offorma (2009), good governance constitute rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency, equity and accountability. Good governance is essential for development of any society.

Factors that Promote Good Governance

i. Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are necessary tools for good governance. Lack of the transparency and accountability breeds corruption. Corruption is a worldwide phenomenon, but it has a greater proportion in Nigeria. The attainment of transparent and accountable government calls for an approach to good governance. Emphasis must be laid on due process and the rule of law in the realization of transparency and accountability in the management of both human and material resources.

ii. Credible Electoral Process

The integrity of the electoral process in the last eleven years was shrouded by questions of irregularities and poor conduct. Nigeria electoral history has not proved to be an avenue for orderly political succession. According to Okafor (2010), most elections held in Nigeria have been characterized by violence and large scale rigging, thereby making mockery of democratic ideals. It has been recognized that one of the greatest challenges to the future of political governance in Nigeria is how to ensure the peaceful conduct of free and fair elections in which the peoples mandate would be freely exercised without fear or intimidation. There is still hope that the flaws of the last elections would be addressed and corrected.

iii. Adherence to the Rule of Law

For good governance to prevail, there must be adherence to the rule of law. A lawless government will always breed chaos and disunity. The government must uphold the rule of the law to show discipline and regard for order and procedure. No man should be above the law and public officers should not disregard the laws because of immunity of their offices.

iv. Provision of Social Infrastructure

All Modern governments have great concern for provision of social infrastructures through the evolution of effective and people friendly social policies. Therefore, poverty, ignorance and illiteracy should be addressed by the government. These could be checked by ensuring that adequate provisions are made to alleviate poverty through job creation. Free and compulsory education could be provided by the government to address the high rate of illiteracy and ignorance in the society.

Strategies of Implementing Citizenship Education for Effective Citizenship in Nigeria

Citizenship education aims at inculcating in students knowledge, skills as well as values and attitudes that will enable them fit into and contribute to the progress and well being of the society to which they belong. According to the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2004), the over all objective of citizenship education is to produce good citizens who take after the present crop of leaders.

The content of citizenship or social studies education both at primary and junior secondary school levels teaches the students or pupils symbols of national identity and how to respect them. Such symbols of national identity include: the National flag, the National Anthem, the National Pledge, etc. Students are made to recite both the National Anthem and the National Pledge daily in their schools. According to Mbaba (2007), as the students continue to practice these every time, the spirit of national consciousness will be imparted in them, which will make them good and effective citizens of their country. It is the goal of citizenship education to impart these virtues to learners. If our young ones internalize these core values; if they grow up knowing, for instance, that they have a patriotic duty to take active interest in the civic and political affairs of their country, they would be alive to their right and responsibilities and will defend them.

Citizenship education if effectively taught has the capacity to help Nigerian students reconnect with their communities and government and through citizenship education, students shall be empowered to make informed choice and decisions, take actions individually and as part of collective process. This will bring greater transparency and accountability in the political, economic and social responsibilities placed on the leaders.

However, Easton and Dennis (2000), suggested that nations have to make deliberate effort to ensure that creation of effective citizen who will in turn

create a viable political system. The process of creating effective citizens in any nation takes a lot of time. This is why it is necessary that children are exposed to the very basic political socialization as provided in citizenship education (social studies) curriculum in Nigerian schools. Evidence from research confirms the view that if children are exposed to political education in their formative ages, these children may grow up into effective adult citizens who would have internalized their basic civic obligations (Esheya, 2006). Therefore, citizenship education teachers should devise ways and means of helping children to internalize the necessary citizenship qualities which would make the children to grow into effective adult citizens.

Teachers of citizenship education should stress more on voters' education; this is because political violence appears to have remained part of our history. Voters' education presents the electoral procedures and management as well as focuses on the rights and responsibilities of voters. Voter education in secondary schools is a futuristic and radical approach to voter education in Nigeria. It is very apt and necessary to start voter education in secondary school's citizenship or social studies curriculum, if not the primary schools, because the student today is a voter tomorrow. A well informed youth would not be subject to the manipulations of desperate politicians who want power at all cost. Ezegbe (1988) and Mezieobi (1992) have shown that the overall aim of citizenship education is to make children become patriotic, socially responsible, and good citizens by understanding the social milieu they are operating from. With effective citizens, it will be easier for the nation political system to be more stable, focused and devoid of fraud and corrupt practices.

Citizenship Constraints, A challenge to Citizenship Education in Nigeria

Nigerian citizenship may be said to have started from independence on the first day of October, 1960. Prior to that date, Nigerians were either colonial subjects or British protected persons. With the advents of states, a Nigerian now enjoys federal citizenship in addition to being a citizen of his state, that is to say, state and national laws act on the same citizen.

The citizenship status of Nigerian vis-à-vis the federal republic is clear, but what is not clear is the status of the citizen within each of the thirty-six states. Thus, Achebe (1983) observes that since 'tribe' and 'tongu' differed in the newly independent Nigeria, in brotherhood we stand. But most unfortunately this was not to be and has not been. This problem of ethnicity has made Nigeria citizenship a mere Mockery. A look at our application forms for offer

of jobs and admissions into higher institutions often show the request for information on name, local government, and state of origin. All these requirements render impotent the rights and privileges of Nigeria citizens as contained in Nigerian constitution.

Since independence, a highly sensitive phrase such as, place of origin has occupied exalted place in the political and social vocabulary of this country. Scholarships, jobs, appointments and provision of social amenities are distributed to members according to the formula of “place of origin”. Unless this problem of state citizenship is resolved, Nigerians will continue to think of themselves as citizens of federal republic of Nigeria but as strangers in part of the country which they reside outside their state of origin.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The need for creation of effective citizenship that will provide the country’s future political leaders on the platform of good governance cannot be ruled out. The goal can only be realized through citizenship education programme in Nigeria schools. Citizenship education enables students to deal with injustice, inequality, power struggle and promotion of political participation and democratic culture.

It is therefore recommended that citizenship education should be made compulsory at all levels of education in Nigeria. Special incentives should be provided to teachers who teach citizenship education such as sponsorship to conferences, workshops, seminars, and payment of special allowance. This will motivate them to implement citizenship education curriculum in Nigerian schools. Nigeria constitution should be reviewed especially on those contentious issues like citizens’ rights and status outside their state of origin. The constitution should be explicit in addressing this matter as it will go a long way in making citizenship education firmly rooted in Nigerian schools.

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