CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR ACHIEVING THE SEVEN POINT AGENDA IN NIGERIA FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Citizenship Education examines the conduct of individuals as part of national development. It gives individuals sound foundation on which to build their value system and encourages them to respect the rights and dignity of others in a democratic system. On the other hand, one of the ways of achieving the seven point agenda is through effective and efficient citizenship education. However, the paper proposes how citizenship education can be used as an instrument for achieving the seven point agenda in Nigeria for national development.

Introduction

Every society is made up of citizens and the strength or weakness of the society depends upon the characters of its citizens. To empower and involve everyone in the process of safe guarding the country’s stability and encouraging change, there is the need to gear their thoughts and imaginations accordingly through citizenship education, hence according to Aibangbe (2006), there is no better time to talk about citizenship education for effective citizenship in Nigeria than now when our nation appears to be at the brink of collapse.

For the seven point agenda to be achieved in a heterogeneous society like ours, there is the serious need for reorientation of the citizens and one of the ways of achieving this is through an effective and efficient citizenship education programme. One of such citizenship programme is the “rebranding” programme of Professor Dora Akunyili, but that is at the higher level. For this to be effective it has to start from the grassroot which is from the primary school level. This implies including citizenship education as a subject in the primary, secondary school syllabi and not only at the tertiary level. The seven point agenda is a laudable attempt by the present administration but it cannot be achieved if the citizen are still of the previous mindset of corruption, dishonesty, nepotism etc, which have been plaguing previous administrations and their programmes for national development.

Concept Clarification

Citizenship Education: - This can be described as a process of spreading the ideas or knowledge of citizenship skills, traits and abilities required for the development of the nation and members of the diverse Nigerian communities (Obioworo and Avwata, 1997). This indicates that citizenship education aims at conveying the ideas of the society. It also means those things we expect the Nigerian youth to acquire in order to develop and contribute meaningfully to the development of the country. The ultimate aim of citizenship education in Nigeria entails how individuals may be transformed through the process of education into sound and effective citizens. Therefore, citizenship education is the preparation of individuals to participate as active and responsible citizens in national development. Citizenship education aims at developing capability for thoughtful and responsible participation in political, economic, social and cultural life.

According to Meziobi (1992) “citizenship education equips the individual with the pertinent knowledge and skills that will enable one meaningfully contribute to the development and progress of an ever enhancing dynamic world”.

From the definitions above, one can deduce that citizenship education is aimed at educating the citizens or individuals to become socially, economically and politically integrated into the society and helps them acquire skills and competencies for maximum productivity and development.

The seven point agenda: - On assumption of office on May 29, 2007 President Umaru Musa Yar’adua met a nation bedeviled with so many problems that needed urgent solutions. It was against this background that the president unveiled a seven point agenda which he hoped would put back the
economy on track. The agenda was to be the platform on which his administration would spring off. In his inaugural speech, he said our goal is to build on the greatest accomplishments of the past few years. Relying on the seven point agenda that formed the basis of our contract with voters during the recent campaigns, we will concentrate on rebuilding our physical infrastructure and human capital in order to take our country forward.

Nigeria had seen such economic packages as Obasanjo’s Operation Feed the Nation, Maryam Babangida’s Better Life for Rural Women, President Shehu Shagari’s Green Revolution and the Austerity measures, Buhari/Idiagbon’s War Against Indiscipline (WAI), President Ibrahim Babangida came with Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), General Sani Abacha’s economic package till date has remained amorphous except that he succeeded in stabilizing the exchange rate throughout his regime. President Olusegun Obasanjo’s economic policy included, privatization, monetization, consolidation among others. All these have not succeeded because the citizens of the country have not been worked on for change of attitude towards these packages. In order to meet up with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Nigerian context, President Umaru Musa Yar’adua in his inaugural speech mentioned his economic development goals known as Seven Point Agenda as listed below:

**Power and Energy:** This sector deals with the power generating system where electricity is produced in Nigeria. For any meaningful and sustainable development to take place, there must be constant power supply because it is one of the criteria that attracts foreign investors and boost industrialization. Due to the epileptic nature of power supply in Nigeria, the president placed power and energy sector first which he described as a failed sector that is fundamentally slowing down the nation’s economic progress. This sector is one of the strongest variables in the factors militating against the manufacturing sector. It is characterized by low generating capacity relative to installed capacity. Currently, electricity generation is in the region of about 3000 (three thousand) megawatts while the current estimated national consumption need is not less than 25000 (twenty five thousand) megawatts. The potential demand for electricity in Nigeria has been estimated at 100,000 (one hundred thousand) megawatts. Based on this, the sum of ₦139.78 billion was provided in the 2008 budget for the development of infrastructural in the critical sector of power and energy. It represents an increase of 15.6% over the 2007 allocation. (www.whichwaynigeria.net). Part of the allocation is to be utilized for the completion of the 32 on-going power transmission projects and the rehabilitation of key power stations nation wide. The allocation is President Yar’adua’s emergency programme on the power sector based on his belief that there can be no meaningful industrial development without steady power supply. It is projected that the nation should attain at least 30,000 megawatts from its current level of between 3000 and 4000 megawatts by the year 2011 and 50,000 megawatts by the 2015.

**Food Security and Agricultural:** Food is one of the basic necessities of life sustenance without which no society can survive. Presently in Nigeria according to www.whichwaynigeria.net about 65% of her citizens are living in abject poverty and cannot afford to provide three square meals per day. Based on this, the president included food security and agriculture in his seven point agenda in order to improve the agricultural sector and make food supply available to all citizens. In order to achieve the food for all and poverty eradication by the year 2015, president Yar’adua in his budgetary allocation made provision for a total of ₦95 billion for agriculture and water resources sector. This is to enable the construction of dams and irrigation projects nation wide, procurement of tractors and implements, agricultural credits and subsidies which includes the fertilizers subsidy programme. This goal as encapsulated in the seven point agenda is to revolutionize the agricultural sector, improve technology in modern farming so as to achieve a 5 – 10 fold increase in yield and production.

**Wealth Creation and Employment:** - These emphasize development in the non-oil sectors of the Nigerian economy, in order to enhance the revenue base of the nation thereby creating a diversified output and increase in massive employment opportunities for Nigerians. This will help to reduce over dependence on the oil sector and also curbing crime and criminal activities caused by unemployment for youths.
Transportation Sector: - Transportation system in Nigeria ranges from air to land and water transportation. The land transportation includes the use of railways and highways. About 55% of the movement of people and goods are done through land transportation i.e. the use of roads, 30% on air i.e. the use of aircrafts and 15% goes to the use of water transportation i.e. the use of ship for conveying bulky goods. Because of its importance in Nigeria economy and the dilapidating situation of the transport system, President Yar'adua in his developmental goals included the transport sector in his seven point agenda. Based on this, budget earmarked was ₦94.36 billion for the construction and rehabilitation of highways, mapping and geo-information activities, water transportation development, dredging of the River Niger, rehabilitation and modernization of the railway and development of air transportation.

Land Reform: - This means the revampment of land for a sustainable environment. It also encompasses laws guiding the use of land in Nigeria. Prior to the advent of president Obasanjo’s government, policies based on the use of land in Nigeria were not effective. People built housed without following the appropriate plans, most land owners do not have the certificate of occupancy, thereby invading on both private and government owned land. The government stated that while hundreds of billions of dollars have been lost through unused government owned land, changes in the land laws and the emergence of land reforms will optimize Nigeria’s growth through the release of lands for commercialized farming and other large scale businesses by the private sector. The final result will ensure improvements and boost wealth creation initiative. Significantly, the Yar’adua’s administration would require as usual the partnership of the National Assembly in amending where and when necessary the relevant land laws to bring this to reality.

Security: This means adequate and effective protection of life and properties in the society in order to enhance security nationwide and especially in the Niger Delta region. The budget allocation of N444.60 billion for the military and the police to take care of various security services including arms and ammunition, improved information and telecommunication equipment and facilities, equipment and logistic support. Following this, President Yar’adua pledged to invest heavily in the resolution of the Niger Delta crisis as part of his administration’s security measures. The strategic allocation is also, to meet the special needs of the region in terms of physical policies on military security as well as intensifying dialogue between the communities and the federal government. The Yar’adua’s administration no doubt strongly made the point that there can be no viable economy without a good security system. The Niger Delta crisis, remained the primary focal point not only with physical policies, military security but through honest and accurate dialogue between the communities and the government for a people centered development. The major concern here is physical, geographical, environmental, economical, social and political problems.

Education: - This is one of the key factors that leads to meaningful development in any society. The government should invest immensely on educating its citizens. According to (www.whichwaynigeria.net), in Nigeria, more than 50% of its citizens are illiterates, in order to encourage the mass education of the populace, a total of ₦210.45 billion was allocated to education sector representing an increase of 12% over the 2007 allocating. The allocation was mainly for improving the human resource capacity-building, by upgrading facilities in our educational institutions and reforms to improve the quality of and access to education. This is in addition to the intervention, by the Universal Basic Education (UBE) commission, which provides resources to upgrade infrastructure and teaching facilities in primary schools nation wide.

In a nutshell, the overall profile of the 2008 budget is that it is basically structured according to President Yar’adua’s seven point agenda, which now represents the mandate given to him by Nigerians. He is expected to be religiously committed to the full implementation of this agenda as soon as possible.

Citizenship Education as an Instrument for Achieving the Seven Point Agenda.

The previous programmes of past administration failed such programmes as SAP (Structural Adjustment Program), Austerity Measures, Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, etc. failed because of poor implementation due to the fact that the successes were not based on the attitude of the
citizens. In other words, formulating the policies of the programmes, consideration was not given to
the part to be played by the citizen, the governments were more interested in selling ideas programme
to the citizen, than getting the citizens involved. For the citizens to be involved there is need for their
reorientation and development of particular mindset. This is where citizenship education plays a vital
role.

If the seven point agenda is to be achieved, greater effort must be made to change the attitude
of the citizens in order to be more committed to it. The government needs to appreciate the
importance of citizenship education for national development.

Moral education is part of citizenship education. There will be no stability in any society at all
except the vast majority of its citizens are reasonably honest, obedient, peaceful, shun violence aimed
at personal gains, treat others fairly, care about their neighborhood, state and nation. It is necessary to
note that the course content deals with these aspects of social, moral and spiritual orientation of the
youths to develop meaningful skills for coping with societal moral and social problems typical of
good citizenship. It leads to the promotion of consciousness, integrity and nation unity, which our
country needs in this present dispensation and if the seven point agenda is to be achieved.

Citizenship education helps individual to prepare for contributing his quota to his immediate
community. It helps in the development of sense of national concern and obligation to protect and
work for the good of Nigerian citizens and nation than for the good of ones self alone. It informs the
individual about forces that have influenced developments in the political, social, economic and
religions activities and how to utilize the combination of this knowledge in promoting the affairs of
the country which the seven point agenda is part of.

Citizenship education helps to inculcate a sense of belonging, responsibility and acceptability
of all the ethnic groups in Nigeria for the promotion of brother hood in a nation that is almost
politically disintegrated, it inculcates the socio-economic domain which requires knowledge of social
relation in society and social skills as well as vocational training and economic skills for job-related
and other economic activities.

Furthermore, citizenship education encompass our ability to survive in the society as a
member of the community. The achievement of the seven point agenda is determined by the ability of
the individuals in the society to exhibit positive values of trustworthiness by being honest, reliable and
courageous, build a good reputation and being loyal. The achievement of the seven point agenda
equally depends on fair play, like taking turns, open-mindedness and caring. Besides, citizenship at its
core is social responsibility in action. It is doing your part for the common good of all, serving your
community and helping to make our democracy work.

Citizenship education is taught in tertiary institutions with its set roles and objectives and if
taught adequately, it will go a long way towards the achievement of the seven point agenda. For
proper understanding, there is the need to illustrate how citizenship education can be used to achieve
the seven point agenda in the following ways:

- The issue on national security can be achieved through dialogue of which one of the major
  roles of citizenship education is to provide a moral basis for the conduct of individuals and
groups in the society. (Aibangbe, 2006). When individuals become morally sound through
citizenship education, then the government will have less to do on this aspect because after
going through the study, citizens will come out honest, obedient, security conscious and
peaceful individuals ready to shun violence.

- On the issue of wealth creation, this can be achieved through many decent ways which
  include hard work and one of the objectives of citizenship education is developing the ability
to adapt to changing economic, social, cultural, political and physical environment. This is of
paramount importance and, with the achievement of this objective, individuals will become
instinctively hardworking which will eventually lead to wealth creation.

- Food security is one of the points and citizenship education if properly taught will help in the
  acquisition of necessary skills and techniques which when harnessed will help to ensure
adequate food production and management coping with some social problems of which food
security is one.

- For power and energy, aspect of the agenda, citizenship education help to promote national
  consciousness, integrity, patriotism and unity which help the individuals to contributing own
quota to civic duties and obligations. This consciousness when rooted in the citizens through
Citizenship education will go a long way in checking the habits of citizens towards vandalism and sabotage of government efforts in the supply of power and energy by putting a stop to such vices as cutting of high tension cables, destruction of oil pipelines among others.

- On the issue of land reforms, citizenship education will equip citizens with the awareness of legal rights to express their feelings and expose social ills. Since land reforms are aimed at government’s awareness of untapped resources, individuals with the help of citizenship education are out of report these untapped resources.

- Citizenship education will make learning very interesting because it will awaken the individual’s awareness of his immediate environment, thereby encouraging them to identify and exercise their civic right and responsibilities. On this note, citizenship education act as panacea towards the achievement of the point on education.

- The point on the Niger Delta crisis, citizenship education will also help in the inculcation of sense of belonging, and responsibility of every member of the Nigeria ethnic groups for the promotion of brotherhood in a nation that is otherwise heterogeneous linguistically, culturally and politically. Without doubt if this role of citizenship education is effectively perform it then becomes a strong instrument that can be used to achieve this particular point on the Niger Delta crisis.

Conclusion

For the seven point agenda to be achieved we need a kind of training that can help the learner meet the challenges. As a result therefore, it is necessary for the government to intensify effort by inculcating citizenship education not only to the in-school students but also to the out-of-school masses in order to produce functional and well adjusted Nigerians who will help in the achievement of this laudable programme known as the seven point agenda.

Recommendation

1. Subjects related to/or based on citizenship education should be made compulsory at the primary, secondary and tertiary level. This will help to create the awareness that issues of nationalism and patriotism are very essential to the attainment of the seven point agenda.

2. Skills for personal, social interaction and national development should be more emphasized in the citizenship education curriculum.

References


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