CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: BASIC INGREDIENT FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

John Ojukwu Nwaji

Abstract
Like all other field of study, citizenship education has its peculiar concept and philosophy. For the achievement of political stability and for orderly development of society, the citizens of a nation must show and display in their conduct an awareness of basic democratic values, and appropriate political and social responses. Where such awareness is lacking, such a society cannot evolve harmoniously, nor prosper. This paper analyzes the role of citizenship education in the promotion of national awareness. It discussed the challenges and obstacles to national integration and development. It envisaged that citizenship education will provide a viable means for sustained development and social consciousness through the cultivation of positive values and attitudes.

A major aspiration of every country is the desire for rapid development, which naturally depends on very many factors. The development of the Nigerian society would depend on among other things the quality of leadership, follower ship, resource endowment, the use of science and technology, rational utilization of our human and natural resources, honesty and self-discipline and above all unity and stability of the nation.

Notwithstanding the fact that Nigeria is endowed with such great wealth of human and natural resources necessary for development, she is still basically an undeveloped country heavily burdened with the thorny problem of realizing the country of her dream.

One is being forced to ask what is the problem with this “Giant”? Achebe (1983) has underlined that the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. Worse still, many of her citizens, especially those in leadership positions tend to treat the affairs of the country as if the country is no man’s land. Nigeria can assume her rightful position in Africa and the world in general today, if she discovers leaders who have the will, the ability and the vision as Achebe observed. The fact remains that the development of any nation is primarily in the hands of her citizens not foreigners. The citizens and her leaders must be aware of their responsibilities and determine to build a nation where peace and justice will prevail; honesty, probity and accountability will become the watch words. Having this in view, we shall be looking at the possible
instrument through which Nigeria could imbibe the value of responsible citizenship with emphasis on citizenship education.

**The Nature of Man/Interpersonal Relationship**

Every society has its dominant structure or value orientation (basic ideas of beliefs about what is right or good and what is wrong or bad). An individual ideals, conduct; standard and appreciation of the nature of man in the world of meaning of life are inextricably interwoven with the kind and amount of his formative years. It is important to stress that “morality and moral behaviours” carry religious implication, while “ethics” and “ethical standard” have social or cultural significance.

In Nigeria, as it is in most African countries, the group (family, village, ethnic group, state of origin) is more important than an individual. Essen (1972) deals with this point when he states that in the African context, the group rather than the individual is the reality. This particular concept has a lot of implications on how individuals are brought up and trained in their groups.

The prevailing pattern of impersonal relationships in Nigeria could be readily observed in the relationship between husband and wife, father and son or daughter, chief and people in the community, teacher and student, adults and young people, employer and employee, etc. The Nigerian people know very well how they normally treat their fellow man and those who work under them.

Even though Nigeria may be divided against itself politically and culturally, it is recognized that relationships in our various cultures are clearly defined on a hierarchical basis. The measures which one uses in determining how to respond to another person are age and status. It is expected that a person in authority gives others advice and such advice should be accepted by other people because it comes from an authority. “The words of our elders are words of wisdom”, is a popular adage and obedience to authority is a cultural value as well as religious duty. In other words, our basic cultural values, according to Odigbo (2002), could be summarized as follows:

(a) Rigid authoritarian upbringing  
(b) Unquestioning obedience to authority  
(c) Dependency, conformity and high value trait  
(d) The citizen tends to be “other directed” rather than being “self directed”.

**Socialization**

Socialization is simply a process whereby a person’s behaviour is modified to conform to expectations held by members of the social group to which one belongs. A point that is inevitable is that every human being
undergoes various processes of socialization. The characters by which they are eventually associated are formed by the dominant factor in the process of socialization. Most children move from their respective nuclei family setting to various stages of peer group relationship until they fully assume adult role in society during which they are recognized to have developed some definite character traits. In terms of family settings the behaviours of parents and their orientation toward such issues as love of fatherland, dedication to service, tolerance of other peoples’ views and inclination in various ways influence the dispositions of those who live and associate with them. Peer group also has tremendous influence on the socialization of our youths. Since members of the various peer groups emerge from the various families in society, it could be accepted that the prevailing behaviour of peer groups are inherited from the families of their dominant members. This implies that if one wants to understand the reasons for behaviour, he would successfully locate the answer in the person’s family background and the prevailing orientation and behaviours of his peer groups. In the words of Olutobi (1995) “If children are well brought up at home, the influence of their peers would not pose much threat to the values they had imbibed at home”.

In the context of primary and secondary schools education, committed effort is being made to ensure that pupils and students internalize only those values that are indices of responsible citizenship. Other factors that are of critical relevance in the socialization process of our youths are the content of the print and electronic media. There is therefore, the need for government especially those involved in educational policy making to ensure that media output in Nigeria do not negate the values which Nigeria are expected to internalize and to reflect in their daily life.

Leadership Question

The role of leadership in socializing children and youth to become responsible citizens cannot be overemphasized. Leaders in all sectors are focal points, and consequently, whenever the head is mad, the legs become paralyzed. Leadership is a reciprocal process of mobilizing persons and things for collective purpose.

According to Ademoye (1998), leadership is “that quality of mind that enables a person to appreciate a problem in the larger context and see how solution can be found to such problems… It is an attribute of the mind and it enables a man to task himself to appreciate a problem, offer solutions and move society forward and in fact move himself forward in the process.

A leader in addition to exercising authority over those under his jurisdiction also stands out as the legitimate reflector of the image of the people he leads. It is on this premise that the president of a country is referred to as
number one citizen. In the same vein, the governor of any state is regarded as its number one citizen.

The number one citizen of Nigeria is, at least by public expectation, an embodiment of the people’s cherished personality characteristics. The same point could be made of a leader at whatever level, and in all the organization in society.

To be able to play his/her leadership roles, a good leader should be able to possess the following traits: provide good leadership for their followers; showing good examples, providing for the needs of their followers, solving their problems direct, control and motivate their followers to work for the achievement of desirable goals etc.

The behavioural characteristic of a responsible citizen, according to Ajayi (1999), would appear utopian in a polity led by people who do not possess those leadership characteristics. To him, that is why leadership by example is often emphasized. Sad to note that leadership by example in Nigeria is yet to be satisfactorily realized and institutionalized. Achebe (1983) rightly observed that the problem of Nigeria is, “the unwillingness or inability of leaders to rise to their responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership”. On this premise he argues that “Nigerians are what they are only because their leaders are not what they should be”.

**Leadership and Followership**

When people live, work or do something together in groups such as in villages, towns, countries, churches, political parties, associations, organizations, etc. it is compulsory that some members of the group must emerge as leaders, while others automatically become followers. The leaders provide leadership for other members of the groups and influence them to contribute their quota to the task of achieving the goals of their groups.

Scholars have propounded many theories of leadership, some of these are genetic theory traits or behavioural theory and contingency or situational theory. (Graham, 1990). Writers and scholars who believed strongly in the genetic theory of leadership were of the view that unless the leader had inherited at birth unique traits or characteristics of leadership, he would not succeed if he found himself later in a position of leadership, because these traits could not be acquired by any other means.

To the proponents of the genetic theory, unless someone comes from a family of rulers like the Biblical King Solomon, whose father was also a successful king; such a person would find it extremely difficult to succeed as leader. However, other scholars have debunked this claim. Infact, it has been
proved that it is possible for a born leader to fail. For example, King Rehoboam who reigned after his father, King Solomon, failed woefully as he could not hold his kingdom together (I Kings 10:14-28, 12:1-20).

Proponents of trait or behavioural theory of leadership on the other hand have modified the genetic theory. They posit that leaders could emerge from other classes of members of the society. That is, leadership trait could be acquired through training, education, socialization and experience, if those involved are given the education, socialization and experience, if those involved are given the necessary opportunity. This theory suggests that leadership traits are not inborn as people have been made to believe by the proponents of the genetic theory, but rather, that leadership traits could be acquired. They are of the opinion that what a leader does is more important than who he is.

Ajayi (1999) believes that leaders are not born but made right from youth. According to him, “although some people are born with leadership qualities, the leadership style of such people is determined by the collective experiences they have had and the way they relate to different members of society”. A number of ancient and modern day leaders in politics and other facets of human endeavours could not be said to have been born with leadership traits. Rather, they acquired their leadership skills through training, education, socialization and practical experiences and they succeeded or are succeeding.

The proponents of contingency or situational theory believe that rather than what a leader does or who he is, the situation he finds himself in is more important. It is this situation that would make or mar him. If the situation is favourable, then the leader is bound to succeed, on the other hand, if the situation is not favourable, the leader would fail irrespective of whether he was born with leadership traits or he had acquired them through training and education. Thus, what was responsible for the success of King Solomon and not for King Rehoboam?

According to Nwanna (2002), the problem of leadership would vary from one situation to the other. To him, for a leader to succeed in this modern and complex world, training and practical experiences are very important. It is important to state that we can identify leadership at various levels - the family, village, town, organization, country etc.

At the family level, the father is the leader. He is assisted in his various duties by his wife. Other members of the family, that is the children, follow the example and leadership of their parents. Both the leaders and the followers at this level have specific roles to play. The way they play these roles will definitely have an effect on the larger society. At the village and town levels, traditional
rulers and their chiefs are leaders, while other residents of the communities are their followers.

Political leaders are elected functionaries of government at the three tiers of government- (Local, State and Federal). These are the people that provide political leadership for the citizens of the country. Religious leaders in Nigeria are the clergymen (for Christians), Imams, Alfas and Sheiks (for Moslems) and traditional priests (for practitioners of African Traditional Religion), while adherents of these religions are their followers.

Good followers must be co-operative, law-abiding, and loyal to their leaders, tolerant, honest, understanding, hardworking and obedient. Followers are expected to be law-abiding, loyal and obedient to their groups, communities or nations, and they are expected to be honest in all their dealings so that they can perform the duties assigned to them effectively. Followers are also expected to be tolerant of their leader’s mistakes, point out those mistakes to them and offer suggestions where necessary. It is important to point out here that for you to be a good leader; you must have been a good follower. This is because whatever a man sows that he will reap. Followers are not expected to undermine the authority of their leaders. At all levels, a leader must take a correction so that he or she can be successful.

Citizenship Education

Citizenship education is an instrument through which Nigerians could be made to imbibe the values of responsible citizenship and conduct their lives toward national integration and development. Citizenship education consists of the formal and informal methods by which citizens are enabled to understand and contribute to the effective development and working of their society.

Citizenship education is one subject according to Olutobi (1995) that is specifically designed in content and function to produce healthy, good and active citizens, wherein a good citizen is seen as being patriotic, responsible, disciplined and conscientious, morally sound with love for his state. Iwe (1989) defined citizenship education as preparing the child for social responsibility. Vandima (1998) added that citizenship education entails any organized programme, formal or informal that can make the citizens to become more alive to their responsibilities and obligations to themselves, fellow human beings and the society at large.

Ikedianya (1998) sees citizenship education as a conscious process of inculcating certain values, habits, skills and attitudes which the society considers desirable and essential for its survival as a unit and for its development. Hague et al (1992) defined citizenship education as that programme of studies aimed at
training the individual in line with the biblical injunction to teach the child the way of the Lord, when he grows he will not depart from it. Nwaji (2007) believed that citizenship education implies a mutual understanding by the state and the individual.

Citizenship education is not new in the context of the strategies so far adopted by several countries in achieving their societal and personal goals. All the contemporary world powers have committed much material and human resources to citizenship education. They have over several decades experimented on, and discovered the need to give their children citizenship education. The United States since 18th century had introduced citizenship education with the sole aim of making Americans responsible and functional citizens. Consequently more and more programmes of civil education were developed and added to the curriculum. Today, we know that America has gone far ahead in terms of all facets of development than any other nation, because she has laid good foundation on the continuous emphasis on citizenship education.

**Citizenship Education and National Integration**

Integration is seen as a state of an organism or substance where there is a continuous interaction and interactive adjustment psychologically, physically, emotionally and mentally within the environment. Applied to a nation, integration is the harmonious personal adjustment of the individual to the standards, demand and responsibilities of the society of which he is a part and in which he lives. Within and among the groups that make up a community, integration embodies a state of fusion or harmonious interaction and interrelation of the values and functions of persons and groups to make them an identifiable single entity with common attributes, goals, purposes and objectives. Integration can be fostered through socialization process. It is however important to state here that there is no group or nation where there is a perfect state of integration.

The degree of integration in general and within and among individuals and groups vary and are affected by historical, religious, economic, political factors, above all, the level of social awareness or consciousness and socialization processes.

According to Ndubuisi (1981), many Nigerians are ignorant about the consequences of their action on the economic and social well-being of the nation. The concept of wealth and the pursuit of wealth in Nigeria by the individuals be they private or officials in governmental institutions have impeded the path towards development. Self interest has led to the failure of many governmental economic and social establishments. All other industries are ruined through embezzlement by officials in collaboration with few private individuals. Social
services of water, electricity and communication and health are made inefficient in the same way.

The “contract and “contract culture” which followed the oil “boom” or “doom” has given the average Nigerian the false sense of wealth and wealth acquisition by what may be described as legalized robbery of the masses by government officials and few private individuals. Thus, despite the colossal amount we have realized from the exploitation of oil, and which are supposedly invested in industries, building of roads, telecommunication systems, agriculture, we have still become one of the “beggar” nations depending on international loans for development. Huge amounts of money have been invested in our so-called “power sector”, roads, etc all in vain.

The trafficking of currencies by well-placed officials and protected individuals have led to the persistent difficulties of the balance of payment in the country. Yet we have witnessed the situation where individuals imported “mud” and “sand dusts” in pretence of importing “raw materials” for industrial consumption, thereby stocking wealth in foreign banks. The problems of youth restiveness and Niger Delta crisis coupled with kidnappings and pockets of pipeline bombings are still issues of great concern for the nation.

The list of the individual and group activities which hamper national development is endless. Unless we realize the evil effects of our individual or group activities and the corollary consequences, we may not start the race for national development. Here lays therefore, the efficacy and potentialities of citizenship education to re-orientate our educational objectives and training towards national development and integration.

Citizenship education provides the kind of learning experiences and opportunities which help develop the individuals to improve their ability to understand and accept the customs, standards, traditions and cultures of the group of which they are members, and to cooperate and participate actively with the group.

Strategies for Effective Citizenship Education

No nation can hoped to be developed without the individual and collective sense of hard work, honesty and self discipline. According to Anyadele (1974), it is only through hard work, discipline and self-sacrifice that we can achieve the socially desirable end of equal opportunities for all citizens as well as our destiny of national greatness.

Citizenship education should be one of the pre-requisite subjects for gaining admission to the next level of education. It should constitute greater part of the general studies courses in the institutions of higher learning. Teachers with
high moral standards and integrity should be entrusted with the handling of citizenship education courses. This is to allow for proper discussion of the vices and virtues as they affect national stability and development, with the teacher leading by exemplary life. Emphasis should always be on appropriate staff to handle citizenship programmes. This is because many people recruited to teach in schools are character-wise dangerous elements in our school system. Some of them are no doubt aware that they have no moral justification to ask students, for example to be committed to duty, to be honest, to expose evil in all its ramifications and such like when they themselves are guilty.

The student’s population of every school should be such that no class should exceed 35 students in number. The population of school must be such that the teachers should be able to know their class members by names and to understand clearly how they behave.

Another strategy of effective citizenship education is by informal approach. This entails using the mass media and other means to educate those outside the school system. In such programme the national values will be constantly explained to the people and sometimes people who are known to have been living an exemplary life will be required to discuss some topics with their respective communities in designated places, preferably the playgrounds and civic centre with adequate media coverage and broadcast. The essence of this is to make everybody aware of the fact that one does not only need to be in government to be able to contribute towards national development and stability. Citizenship education should also form an essential aspect of training of categories of our armed forces at all levels.

To make the issue of effective citizenship education more serious, all persons irrespective of their class, position and wealth should be made to cough out anything illegally acquired and be confined in prison. The role of Independent Corrupt Practices Control (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in their current efforts to persecute offenders is a welcome development. The current purge of members of the former administrations and other organizations is a welcome development and the rights step in the right direction. Reports of money so far recovered from some members of the Nigerian public and the billions of dollars stocked in foreign banks by “Nigerians” is shocking. The behaviour of these Nigerians towards the country seemed as if they are tenants or mercenaries and as if Nigeria was no man’s land which they could abandon after devastating it. The realization that Nigerians are largely responsible for their problems is a step forward in the bid to achieve the Nigeria of our dream.
Conclusion

The justification of citizenship education cannot be ignored. The importance is predicated on the need for socializing the learners to cultivate desirable habits, values, attitudes, nationalism, and to appreciate the status of the constitution as the will of the people. Responsive citizenship is the foundation for any national development.

Every Nigerian has something to contribute to making Nigeria what she is intended to be. That is why it is recommended that Nigeria should evolve a functional citizenship education in school and out of school. It is only when she has responsible citizens who in essence are well informed, analytical, committed and involved in leadership and followership positions that she could reasonably expect changes in the right direction in the country as a whole.

Recommendation

Citizenship education should be given the top most priority as the systematic process of imbibing the values of nation building by its citizens for social competence. The contents of citizenship education should be expertly prepared, bearing in mind that the class of students for whom they are prepared are expected to occupy leadership positions on securing jobs after graduation.

Citizenship education has to be both formal and informal. This entails, using the mass media and other means to educate those outside the school system for effective citizenship education. Leaders at all levels must live by example. It is therefore imperative that the youths and adults of this country should consciously and formally be re-educated to acquire the right type of attitudes and appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hardwork, fairness, justice and togetherness for the development and integration of the nation.

References


