

REFOCUSING CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION FOR RELEVANCE AND SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Citizenship education for sustainable national development arose as a result of dynamic nature of our educational system in order to search for quality. It is a type of education that searches for sustainable learning needed for the maintenance and improvement of our quality of life and the quality of generation yet unborn. This paper looked at citizenship education as the process of transforming the individual and the society. Realizing that it is a way of life for the nation, citizenship education inculcates national consciousness and patriotism in the learners. The paper also examined the meaning of education for sustainable development and strategies for achieving effective education for the Nigerian citizens.

Introduction

Education in general terms is knowledge and abilities, development of mental power resulting from a systematic series of instruction. It is a continuous process, which the society established to assist its members to understand the heritage of the past and to participate productively in the future. Education according to Anthony (1999) is a necessary medium through which any one can participate on an equal footing with others in the labour market and also be able to understand, defend and promote their right to freely participate in political, social and other aspects of life with little or no hindrances. Suggestively, it is the leading out of the unborn powers and potentialities of the individual in the society and the acquisition of skills, aptitude and competencies necessary for self-realization for coping with life problems.

However, citizenship education in this context can be seen as a way of life for the nation. It is an education, which offers an ideal opportunity to examine, clarify and isolate the need, the assets and problems of the society. Through proper development, implementation and utilization of the knowledge, citizenship education offers the society, right environment or avenue to inculcate in the life of learner, compared to what should be obtainable in the application of this concept (Udofot, 2005; Akpan, 2007).

The philosophy of education in Nigeria is based on the perception of education as an instrument par excellence for affecting national development. Based on this philosophy, citizenship education could be seen as a process that helps to develop the whole man, to enable him function effectively in Nigeria or in whatever environment he may find himself. It is widely believed that citizenship education is an important tool for the achievement of social justice and equity. In accordance with the philosophy also, it is believed that:

- i. Citizenship education is an instrument for National development;
- ii. It fosters the growth and development of the individual, for each individual's sake and the general development of the society.
- iii. It provides equal opportunities for all Nigerian children, irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities for functional education for the promotion of a progressive united Nigeria.

- iv. It is the type of education that prepares the citizens for their proper roles in the society, helps individuals to become good citizens and assisting them to develop the spirit of togetherness as members of one great nation.

From the above background, one can suggest that the overall aims of citizenship education to every citizen of Nigeria is the production of good citizens and inculcating good attributes for qualitative and sustainable national development in the society. Any society that is seeking for qualities and qualitative education, citizens must possess certain qualities that would enhance the development of that society such as: cooperation, loyalty, discipline, dedication, faithfulness, honesty, moral and social responsibility, spontaneity, conviviality, empathy, sympathy and positive regard to human beings (Ikwumelu, 1993; Akpan, 2007).

Citizenship Education for Sustainable National Development

Citizenship education is the type of education which offers an ideal opportunity to examine, clarify and isolate the need, the assets and problems of the society. Through proper development, implementation and utilization of the knowledge, Citizenship education offers the society, right environment or avenue to inculcate in the life of the learner, certain qualities, like laws, ethics and values compared to what should be obtainable in the application of this concept. However, Nigerian society requires new value system that will assist the citizens to appreciate better consciousness. Application of citizenship education would make the dream of the country in educating their citizens in a proper way a reality. Therefore, citizenship education is relevant to the nation's national development and its sustainability (Ufot, 2007; Usman, 2007).

Citizenship education is relevant to the nation through the inculcation of national consciousness and patriotism in the learners. Ezegebe (1988) cited in Akpan (2007), believes that the concept of national implications and improvements should be taught to the individuals citizens. This implies that it is through the concept "education for the citizen" that patriotism, nationalism and civic duty and responsibilities can be rightly taught. This would help the students or learners to have the willingness to develop good habits for the nation building, which is the ultimate aim of sustainable national development.

Another attribute of citizenship education is inculcation of values. Citizenship education is an education programme which offers the citizens an opportunity of inculcating appropriate values in his life, such as commitment to social improvement of his community, concern for others welfare, service to the nation, accountability, probity and tolerance. Apart from values inculcation, it is an education that instills discipline in the life of our youths, such as obedience to the parents at home, patriotism and loyalty to the nation wherever they may find themselves.

Furthermore, there is no nation or society without culture. The methods of transmitting this cultural pattern are possible when implementing citizenship education. Citizenship education helps the learners to learn and acquire some societal-expected behaviours and group activities, attributes, values and feelings. This type of education also helps in transmitting our cultural heritage from one generation to another. Therefore, citizenship education cuts across several human factors of both individual and societal interest (Uche, 1980; Rowell, 1996).

Education for Sustainable Development

Education for sustainable development in this paper arises because of the dynamic nature of our educational system in order to search for quality. It concerns a wide range of interrelated issues, which may be approached through the following principles or dimensions. According to Rowell

Refocusing Citizenship Education for Relevance and Sustainable National Development

(1996), any country looking forward to education for sustainable development should adopt the principles below:

- i. Needs and rights of future generation
- ii. Citizenship and stewardship-rights and responsibilities, participation and cooperation.
- iii. Diversity – cultural, social, economic and biological equality of life – equity and justice.
- iv. Uncertainty and precaution in action
- v. Inter-dependency of society, economic and the natural environment from local to global.

Application of these principles would lead to sustainable national development.

The Way Forward

The above expectations can only come to reality through the application of certain modalities in training our learners or citizens. These modalities are:

1. Citizenship education should be made a compulsory course of study in all levels of education in the country.
2. Textbooks and school curriculum should be revised in accordance with the contents of citizenship education.
3. The goals and aims of citizenship education should be well stated and documented in the school curriculum. This is quite obvious, because it is the curriculum that would specify the concept to be taught so as to achieve the national objectives.
4. Teachers who would transmit the desirable objectives into learners must be trained and the necessary instructional materials be provided.
5. To encourage learners to improve in their performance, those who have shown a remarkable change of behaviour in line with the desired objectives should be rewarded adequately.
6. Beneficiaries of the noble programme should be exposed to practical training within a stipulated period of time. This is done in order to evaluate whether the desirable behaviour and changes have influenced them. This may be in the form of an industrial attachment or internship or something similar to this in which case, the learners be placed under close observation or supervision for good evaluation.
7. Regular evaluation programme within and outside the school environment should be conducted. The result obtained from these assessments would generate opportunities for possible improvement.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to link citizenship education to sustainable national development with a view to identifying how this type of education can be made relevant and sustainable towards national development. The methods of transmitting cultural pattern, fostering economic development and national consciousness and patriotism are possible when implementing citizenship education. Citizenship education should be refocused to enable the citizens to know the cultural norms and social values which their society cherishes, upholds and which would lead them to see the differences between them and those of other people.

Based on its relevance to the national development, education of the citizens should not be looked upon as a preparation for life but rather as life itself hence, full utilisation and implementation of citizenship education in the school curriculum would sustain national development in our society

and the future generation. Having employed all the strategies in the education of our citizens, quality and equality in the educational sector would be ensured for national development.

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