

Citizenship Education: A Tool for Effective Citizenship Development

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Abstract

The paper attempts a conceptualization of citizenship education and ways of developing effective citizenship in the society. The end product of citizenship education is effective citizenship. For citizenship education to achieve this objective, an individual has to go through the planned process; either formal or informal education. This is because, for an individual to contribute effectively to the development of the society, certain changes must have taken place in his/her beliefs, behaviour, perception, ideals and above all the way the individual views the society. He/she must have undergone the process of socialization. To evolve a society where unity, tolerance, values of honesty, hard work, self-esteem, fairness, justice, cooperation, equity, respect for humanity and patriotism flourish there is the need to inculcate in the citizens the values and traits of effective citizenship through citizenship education. The central argument of this paper is that the goal of moulding effective citizenship is better achieved with the roles of citizenship education.

Keywords: Citizenship Education, Development, Effective Citizenship, Socialisation

Introduction

In the contemporary world, one of the goals of governments, especially in the developing world is to evolve a society where unity, tolerance, value of honesty, self esteem, fairness, justice, cooperation, equity, respect for human dignity and patriotism exist. To achieve this, there is the need for education, which is concerned with the whole man in an eclectic world which is the province for education for the citizens. In other words, citizenship education is needed to achieve the objective of having a virile nation, where individuals will possess necessary knowledge and understanding and hold the values and ideals that will lead them to perform their roles as citizens of the country rather than seeing themselves as from a particular region or ethnic group.

It is difficult to build a nation when the nation builders (the citizens) are not manifesting the traits of good citizenship (Falade, 2008). For a citizen to manifest these traits, the roles of citizenship education cannot be overlooked. This is corroborated by Ogundare (2002) when he posited that to produce good citizens there is the need for an educational system to lay emphasis on civic training.

By and large, citizenship education is an education programme designed to build in the young learner, knowledge, understanding and skills crucial for full and effective participation in the state of which he/she is a member (Omolade, 2006).

Citizenship Education defined.

The relationship between an individual and the state is the individual's political membership of the state and his/her personal allegiance to the state as citizen. Permanent allegiance to the state is a fundamental feature of citizenship. The status of a citizen is an

official recognition of the individual's integration into the political system. Foreign nationals living in the country are subjected to the authority of the country and may even owe it allegiance but it is the citizens who have duties, rights, responsibilities and principles that the non-citizens have to a lesser degree or do not have at all.

However, an individual needs education as a veritable tool for citizenship training. Hence, the concept of Citizenship Education. Otelaja and Ayoade (2009) described citizenship education as a nationalistic course that is designed for the promotion of responsible citizenry. It is a field of study that is geared towards the achievement of specific national education objectives, hence, it is designed to inculcate desirable attitudes and values such as:

- (i). respect for the worth and dignity of the individual;
- (ii). Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
- (iii). Moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations;
- (iv). Shared responsibility for the common good of society; and
- (v). promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.

Citizenship education is a field of study for desirable citizenship transmission towards the promotion of national consciousness, good leadership and followership. In the view of Obasi and Erundu (2000) Citizenship education is the form of education which is specifically designed in content and function to produce healthy, good and active citizens. They contend that a good citizen is not born but is made through citizenship education, whether formal or informal.

According to Fageyinbo (2004) Citizenship education is a continuous formal and non-formal education given to all citizens irrespective of location, sex and wealth; in order to produce informed, nationalistic, participatory, rational and articulate leaders and followers. Omolade (2006) posited that citizenship education is the development of the ideas, beliefs, habits, behavior and attitude of the individual so that he/she may become a useful member of the society. In other words, it is the basis for effective participation and contributions to the life of the society. It is an educational programme fashioned to build in learner, knowledge, understanding and skills crucial for full and effective participation in the state of which he/she is a member. The methods of citizenship education are formal and informal. The school as a formal set up strives to develop individuals with necessary knowledge, understanding, values and ideals that will lead them to perform their roles as citizens. Adetoro (2004) sees citizenship education as a nationalistic course that is designed for the promotion of responsible citizenry. It is a field of study for desirable citizenship transmission towards the promotion of national consciousness, good leadership and followership.

Above all, the various definitions emphasised the development of effective citizenry, a citizen that will be able to function and contribute effectively to the development of the country to the benefit of all citizens. Therefore, citizenship education is the planned process through which individuals understand, acquire and internalize the values, attitudes, and norms of the society in which they live and are actively involved in the activities within it to guarantee the collective good of every member.

Citizenship Education and Effective Citizenship Development

Citizenship education is a new subject in the curriculum of schools in Nigeria. It is not as old as the Social sciences subjects like Economics, Geography, History and Political Science. The introduction of citizenship education into Nigerian educational system was supposed to have been achieved by subjects like civic, History and Social Studies. But it was realized that these subjects and other Social sciences only relate to citizenship in part because they have other messages which overwhelmed education of the citizens. Their contents were too academic to bring about the expected changes in Nigerian. For example, citizenship education was relegated to the background in Social Studies

because the teachers emphasize on various components of Economics, Government and Geography while neglecting the central theme of Citizenship Education. According to Omolade (2006) citizenship values were not being inculcated in the young ones, therefore, the nation began to lose its citizens to thuggery, hooliganism, apathy, looting, ethnicity and hatred. The mentality and sensibilities of citizens were directed towards anti-democratic forces and ethnic tendencies.

According to Akinlaye (1997) citizenship education means more than the mere teaching of facts about the community, it is about learning to understand and believe in democratic functions as a living and changing process in the environment. Its methods consist of both formal and informal methods through which citizens are educated to comprehend and contribute to the effective and smooth running of the society. In order to achieve this objective, countries equipped schools to promote effective citizenship, through appropriate curriculum, development of learners to process the necessary knowledge, skills, understanding, experience, ideals and values which make them to perform the expected satisfying roles as citizens of the country. It should not be misconceived that citizenship education is only for the teaching of the facts of governmental structure and its functions, the memorization of the names of government functionaries but it deals with promotion of effective citizenship. Therefore, the school as a formal set up is in existence to teach the students to understand, acquire and internalise democratic process as a living, dynamic process, rather than as a set of complete beliefs to be memorized without questioning.

Citizenship Education is expected to perform certain roles in the school system, these roles as designed for the Nigerian schools are from the objectives of Social Studies (Adetoro, 2004), this points to the fact that citizenship education cannot be treated in isolation of Social Studies.

These roles include the following:

- i. Developing a good sense of judgment, moral and social responsibility in order to become a useful member of the society.
- ii. Appreciating the culture and cultural heritage of the people within the locality and national environment.
- iii. Understanding the world in order to sort out the confused Social World.
- iv. Promoting positive attitudes and opportunity, values of honesty, hard work, self esteem, fairness, justice, cooperation, tolerance and

equity for national unity and development.

- v. Acquiring relevant knowledge and information for rational utilization of our natural resources and conservation of the environment and the resources.

Akinlaye (1997) pointed out that three distinct elements of Social Studies education should be involved in citizenship education, in order to produce the desired outcome in learners, that is, to have effective citizenship the three elements should be involved. The first element is knowledge: This refers to students' cognition and understanding of the evolving social and physical environment. Students are to acquire the basic facts, information, concepts, principles and generalization about their social world, as well as the realities of the physical environment. They must learn about their cultures and those of other cultures in other lands. This knowledge is important for a good living and participation in society. The content of this knowledge should as much as possible be drawn from the realities of life from an individual's immediate environment. This will ensure that the knowledge as taught by teachers would be the one needed by the learners to better understand his/her social environment and contribute effectively to its development.

The second element is citizen's skills and competencies of participation. The learners have specific cum important skills and competencies which must be promoted through pedagogic principles. These skills are; patient listening, eloquent speaking, recording, analysis and that of inference. Individuals need these skills and abilities to deal with issues and problems arising from their interaction with people, institutions and environments be it physical or social environment. These skills are based on the fact that effective citizens should be one who can think critically about the environment, people, social institutions, goods, rights of fellow citizens in the society and the conditions in the country. Effective citizens should be able to suggest possible solutions to the problems bedeviling government and other social issues.

The third element is the attitude and values of effective citizens. A good citizen must possess certain attitudes and values that are considered desirable. This includes the development of comradeship and cooperation, as well as togetherness in the learners from elementary school levels. Specific and tangible learning experiences on honesty, sincerity, integrity, personality, accountability and fairness should be incorporated

by the school into the lessons' topic for learners. Also experiences on 'concern for others' tolerance, 'respect for authority', 'rule of law', law and order', 'rights of others', 'respect for life and property', trustworthiness', 'reliability and dependability' and the benefit of 'hard work' of citizens in the society should be included in the classroom activities.

These are the appropriate school experiences for the development of attitudes and values which form the platform of citizenship education. They are the attitudes, experiences, and values that are expected as the valid outcomes of teaching through classroom active involvement of students in the learning process. Thus the effort of teachers must move citizenship education toward realistic personal experience, social participation, knowledge concerning payment of taxes and the utilization of taxes in the society, social ideals and standards for the formation of moral values and of political concerns which serves as function of the highest social impact.

Conclusion

This paper revealed the need for citizenship education as a way of achieving effective citizenship in the country, effective citizenship involves the development of the social self through the process of cultural moulding by which the individual learns the accumulated knowledge, skills, beliefs, habits and other patterns considered to be either formal, informal and good leadership. Citizenship education is a nationalistic course that is designed for the promotion of responsible citizenry. It is a field of study for desirable citizenship transmission towards the promotion of national consciousness, good leadership and followership

Recommendation

If the effective performance of citizenship education in achieving its goal of moulding effective citizenship is realized, teachers should change from the traditional teaching methods. The usage of the strategies known to be effective and strengthen the links between citizenship rhetoric and reality throughout the school should be encouraged. These strategies as pointed out by Omolade (2006) are as follows:

- i. The instructional process must be one that introduces, reinforces and applies concepts, skills and values in simple but concrete terms, with learning activities that reach into the community.
- ii. Learners should be allowed to investigate issues in open classroom environments where enquiry

- is encouraged. This will enable them to be more supportive of democratic ideals and principles.
- iii. Positive students, political activities, attitudes and behavior would be more prevalent in schools where students are involved in a high level of participation than those of lower levels.
 - iv. Students will understand democratic principles more easily when teachers adopt the routine classroom techniques, printed drill materials factual and patriotic ritual.
 - v. Students' publications, when encouraged, becomes an obvious vehicle for citizenship in action.
 - vi. The learning tools for citizenship education should extend beyond classroom activities. In social sciences, Nigeria history, political science and government, students read, discuss and write about the value of participatory democracy. But the abstract principles come to life and torch students through extracurricular forums, such as students' activities outside the school system;p.101
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