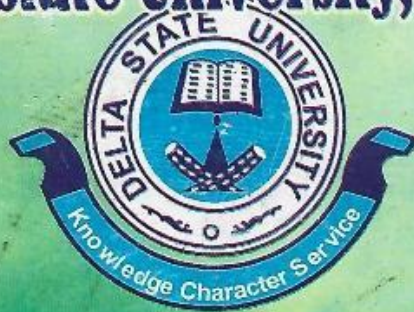


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CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: A CONTRIVANCE FOR UNITY AND STABILITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The disturbance of ethnic profanation and religious crisis in Nigeria has reached an alarming rate that if not checked may tear the country apart. As a result of ethnic violence, and religious crisis in Nigeria, many souls and properties have been lost. The country has been destabilized in so many ways and this has hindered the economic development of the country. It is as a result of this that this paper considers citizenship education as an instrument with which Nigeria can attain unity and stability. The purpose of this paper is to inquire into the concept of citizenship education and the vindication of its addition into the school curriculum. This paper having looked at the roles of citizenship education, therefore concludes that its inclusion in the curriculum of schools at all levels of education will help to check disunity and enhance unity and stability in Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria as a nation has been in a state of confusion. This is as a result of religious crisis intra and inter ethnic violence in the country. The crises include Niger Delta in the South and religious crisis in the North. The crisis in Niger Delta was not only as a result of many years of neglect by various administrators of the region but for the failure of the development projects by both governments and the multinational companies in the region. According to Dr. Olawale Albert, *"the crisis was as a result of the failure of the development projects misplaced priorities in the selection of projects in the Niger Delta which have nothing to do with the needs of the people of the area were the major cause of political agitation which has degenerated into hostage taking by militants"*. Religious crises in Northern Nigeria has been as a result of religious extremists, religious intolerance, religious fanaticism and politics of religion. These have called for confederacy and secession, suspicion and distrust among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Several efforts have been made by the government to restore peace and stability in Nigeria but all to no avail. For instance, the Federal Government inaugurated the Council of Inter-religious Harmony co-headed by the Sultan of Sokoto, the President Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs and the National President of Christian Association of Nigeria. Their efforts have not yielded appreciable positive result.

Well meaning individuals have made various suggestions to see that Nigeria, as a nation, remains indivisible entity where every Nigeria will first see himself as a Nigeria before seeing himself as an Ibo or Yoruba, etc. For the development of national consciousness, it involves placing public or national interest before personal ones Iyama (1991). The success of this would be through Citizenship Education. Citizenship education is an important means by which countries teach citizens their rights and responsibilities.

Problem of study

There have been plethora of ethnic violence, religious crisis which have resulted into loss of lives and properties. This has occasioned instability in the Nigerian polity. Also, political parties are formed along ethnic lines. Because of the above situation in Nigeria, there has been primordial loyalties that is, each section, of section of the country has a political organization catering for the interest of its people hence the Nigerian Nation has been balkanized along ethnic lines.

Role of Education

Education as the process of learning and knowing should not be limited to school textbooks. It is a continuous process which occurs throughout our stay on earth. Our regular activities and events that occur around us tend to educate us in one way or the other, because knowledge is passed across. Education is holistic. As such, it would be an under-statement to say that the existence of human being is fruitless without education - the fountain of ideas, wisdom and knowledge.

Recently, much consideration has been given to the roles the school is supposed to play in the training of good citizens in Nigeria. According to Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) Education is considered as potent instrument for change and development. No wonder Iyewarun (1989) stated clearly and firmly that education is an instrument by which young members are brought up and socialized so as to become useful and

active member of the society. The role of education differs from culture to culture. Metzicobi, Domike and Osakwe (1996) hold up to this view that emphasis placed on the goal of education ranges from culture to culture and from society to society. To him, while some people see education as an instrument for achieving a specific objective, others see it as a means of training the mind and intellect. Ukeje (1996) supports this opinion by stating that some people view education as an instrument for achieving a specific objectives such as socialization and means of social mobility while others see education as a means of inculcating a particular ideology.

Yusuf (2005) on his own view different from others stated that the school should not be used as an instrument for training in citizenship only, rather, it should be directed at the training of the mind and the development of the intellect. It is noted that many educationist and social studies educators such as Metzicobi (2000), Ezegbe (1993), Osakwe (1993) and Obike (1993) are of the opinion that education is an effective instrument for citizenship and civic responsibility and the school has always been used to perpetuate the tradition of the society.

Awareness is a virtue in itself given that the lack of awareness is lamented everywhere. Education spreads awareness, informing us about our rights and services that we can access. On the most basic notes, it teaches us to differentiate between right and wrong. For most part of our lives, we falter in dichotomizing right and wrong but the right education gives us the right answers. Coker (1970) stated that the school has always served as a major channel for inculcating in its members independence, self reliance, responsibility and moral uprightness. Federal government of Nigeria has it as one of its educational objectives, as the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.

Education can be used in this present time to foster much needed unity for the survival of the nation now that Nigeria unity and democracy is under threat. It has become very important to introduce citizenship education as it relates to national consciousness and national unity as a result of inter-ethnic and religious and leadership crisis that have nearly everyday occurrence in Nigeria.

Omare (1999) observes that at various times, the need arises for countries to seek solution to pressing problems of national importance, and this has been the position of various countries in search of political stability, unity, peace and progress. The instrument employed always to achieve unity and national consciousness is education.

Need For Citizenship Education

The need for national unity and stability is greater now in Nigeria than ever before especially with rampant ethnic violence, Boko Haram and religious crisis. Many highly-placed Nigerians on the pages of newspapers such as Odumegwu, Ojukwu, Umaru Dikko and Adesanya Abraham have often described one Nigeria as temporarily a dream and utopia (Punch 1999). Education is the only vehicle of transformation to foster peace and unity. To be on the safe side, we should evolve the type of education that will inculcate in the learners the ideal national consciousness and awareness. Therefore, citizenship education should be introduced to all levels of educational system in Nigeria.

In the views of Metzicobi, Domike and Osakwe (1996), Sparta which was essentially a military and aristocratic city transformed Homers chivalric type of education into a system that served its political and military purposes. In the same vein, Adeyinka (1992) cited the communist philosophy of the U.S.S.R which was different from that of pre-revolution Russia that the communist party found is necessary to transform not only the social system but the attitudes, loyalty and thinking of soviet people. The instrument used for the change was education, and within a few years, Soviet Union was transformed from an agrarian society to an industrial powerful state. In the same way, Omare (1999), notes that West Germany was concerned with preparing students to acquire political knowledge, values and skills for democratic right in a free nation. As a result, political education was introduced at both federal and state levels of German education. Iyamu (1999) defines citizenship education as a conscious effort to inculcate in the youth, a set of values and attitude contingent on the need and problems of the society. According to Osakwe (1993) Citizenship education conveys to the learners, the body of knowledge, set of values and behavioural orientation that are considered vital and necessary for the sustenance and wellbeing of the people. Osakwe and Iledjere (1993) define citizenship education as a system for the acquisition and internalization of the values, sentiment and norms of the society in which they live and actually get involved to ensure that the common good of the citizens is catered for including resisting anti-social and unguided youthful exuberance. According to Dave (2006), the aim of citizenship education is to develop young people into reasonable citizens who understand their rights and responsibilities and can play an active part in society. In the same way, citizenship education requires a citizen to be well informed, gather facts, reject ethnocentrism, religious jingoism and encourage national consciousness. This simply means that citizenship education will develop in individuals, skills attitudes and values that will

enable them to show concern for the wellbeing and dignity of others respecting the worth of others and approaching civil decision in a rational manner.

The current happenings in the country shows that there is high degree of ethnocentrism among Nigerians. There have been issue of ethnic violence among Nigerians, religious crisis between the Christians and Muslims, kidnapping and rampand bombing by the Boko Haram. All these are done to frustrate President Goodluck Jonathan's administration. The Northerners has it at the back of their mind that they are born to rule and without them there is no Nigeria. As a result of distrust and suspicion, various Nigerian leaders, such as Wole Soyinka, Odumegwu Ojukwu have called for a sovereign national conference to re-negotiate Nigerian unity on the pages of Nigerian newspapers and rotation of presidency among the six geopolitical zones. The need for national awareness is very vital in Nigeria at this critical time of our national history. Nigeria leaders are only conscious of their ethnic background and are suspicious of other ethnic group.

There has been an unfortunate feeling of general despondency on the part of many Nigeria. Obasanjo (1999) expressed his opinion while addressing Ijaw leaders as a reaction to ethnic violence embarked upon by the Ijaw Youth in the Niger Delta. He further stated that Nigerians were not patriotic and lacked sense of national consciousness stability and unity. By teaching citizenship education is an attempt to foster national unity. The federal government, in the past has introduced Universal Basic Education (U.B.E.) established Unity Schools otherwise called Federal Colleges, the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), and the National Youth Service Corps Scheme. President Obasanjo noted that the Universal Basic Education has one of its objective as the correction of education imbalance in the country while launching the scheme in Sokoto State. To create a sense of national consciousness and patriotism in the minds of Nigerians, citizenship education should be introduced and make compulsory at all levels of education. This will give the learners experiences needed to achieve national objective.

Roles Of Citizenship Education In Nigeria

It is agonizing that our school system has provided international studies at the expense of national education Yusuf (2005). Fafuwa (1974) noted that students in Nigeria know more about European people than Nigerian who belong to ethnic groups different from their own. It is against this background that Domike and Osakwe (1996) opines that among Nigerians, it is necessary to provide Nigerians the type of education that is characterized by Nigerian intellectual education. It is the recognition of the utilitarian value of citizenship education that Ikwurmelu (1994) defines Citizenship Education as the type of Education that transforms a person into good citizen. Citizenship education aims at inculcating through practical exercises such qualities as public spiritedness, voluntary service and sense of fair play, honesty and respect for opposing opinions and views, self-sacrifice for the good of others, these qualities will promote self-reliance, dignity, national ethnics, and unity in diversity and national economic and political stability.

Nigeria is a pluralistic society with about 250 (two hundred and fifty) ethnic groups. Each of these ethnic groups has it own cultural traits such as norms, values and attitudes, that it cherish, defends and want to preserve it. Nigerian Youths who are products of these diverse culturbs have diverse religious, economic, political and other social beliefs. It is therefore regrettable that these differences have often been emphasized by the ruling class to achieve their selfish interest. Osahon (2012). It has become the norm for modern citizenship education to have a strong human rights value base, to make specific reference to children's rights and address issues related to diversity and the right of minorities within society. There is the need, therefore for a conscious effort towards making the citizens of Nigeria to have an understanding of their cultural diversity and exploit it to the advantage of the nation. Iyewarun (1989) observers that during colonial years, education was used to inculcate religious ideas and values. To him the evangelical efforts succeeded partly because they started with children at the elementary stage. In the United States of America, inculcation of national consciousness and national pride become successful using education Omara (1999).

The federal government observes that education can be used to effect changes in the attitude and behaviour of learners (FRN 2004). Therefore citizenship education when introduced would foster mutual respect among different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Obasanjo (2000) observes that Nigerian have a sense of territorial unity only rather than national unity. He suggested that it is in the national interest that these ethnic groups develop respect for each other's value system. This can only be achieved if they know and understand each other's custom. In support of this view Obike (1993) notes that citizenship education teaches attitude and values in current affairs and include the ways of democracy which include democratic ideas, skills and techniques required for democratic actions.

Citizenship education in our school system will inculcate national moral values and develop a truly patriotic citizen whose consciousness will transcend its ethnic boundary, on a consequence produce an educated citizen, who knows his duties to his country. At this trying period of our national history, Nigeria requires citizens that are capable of tackling problems of unity and development. Nigeria should also borrow ideas from

developed countries like U.S.A. where citizenship education from social studies has been used to build a highly developed sense of national consciousness.

The Curriculum Framework And Citizenship Education

Many scholars have adduced ideal focal point of citizenship education in Nigeria. The nature of curriculum content vis vis the recipients was a major concern shortly after independence in October 1, 1960. The initial school curriculum was heavily dominated by the influence of the colonial Masters and largely tailored towards western aspirations. In Nigeria, it was a prominent feature for a child to be well acquainted with events outside the shore of Nigeria, while extremely novice about what obtains in his/her immediate environment. This was partly due to erroneous British influence on Nigeria education system, Fafunwa (1974), Makinade (1979). It is logical that a child that is deficient in the knowledge of events in his/her surroundings has an uphill task of learning to be good citizen of that society. Fafunwa (1974) described the products of colonial education as though African in colour, but British in intellect and outlook. To restructure the curriculum towards underlining Nigeria cultural values, and aspiration, irrespective of the curriculum framework and definite career subject was a major focus after the independence. The belief among some scholars is that such an educational design aim at serving national interest is perceived as form of citizenship education Fafunwa (1974) Yusufu (1995).

Multiculturalism is a prominent feature of Nigerian society and it is sad to note that it has resulted into a perennial problem of sort centrifugal nationalism is a prominent feature of political actors. As earlier stated, Nigeria is made up of about 250 ethnic groups with diverse culture, religious and value system. The rate of religious and ethnic conflict is alarming. The political crisis of 1960s has ethnic and religious undertone. The crisis culminated into a civil war between 1967 and 1970. There were so many other crisis in the country till date that has disrupted the activities of the country. In response to this scholars have argued that school curriculum must be redesigned to promote national unity, religious tolerance, socio-political and cultural integration Awosolu (1993) Metzubi Domike Osakwe (1996). They argued that citizenship should not define nationality in terms of ethnic, religious and cultural identity. The argument goes further that the teaching of citizenship education should foster the spirit of nationalism rather than ethnocentrism and individualistic tendencies. Bernard (2006) one of the architects of citizenship education in British schools, stated that the subject should educate children on how to be politically literate using real issues. This is because being taught to respect the law without learning bad laws can be changed and better ones promoted tends to create apathetic rather than active citizens. He stated that citizenship education is one of such rare fields which can provide this aspect of education. He therefore suggests that citizenship requires careful selection of objectives, content and procedures. If carefully and appropriately directed, it can prepare a child to participate effectively in the progress of his community on the teaching of citizenship education. Shaver and Berlak (1968) argue that citizenship education should not be programmed upon the ideas of what is desirable but upon the empirical and virtual supposition about what is and will be.

Conclusion And Recommendations

The development of the right type of values attitudes, beliefs, habits and skills which are necessary for the survival and development of Nigeria in all its ramifications has been a major concern for her education. Religion and moral instruction which had been the major means for the inculcation of these values had been found to be inadequate in the fulfilment of the goals of citizenship education. It is against this background that the following recommendations were made.

1. For effective implementation, education should be made free and compulsory at least up to senior secondary school level. This is because students would have inculcated good citizenship at this level of education.
2. Citizenship education should be introduced at all levels of education. This is because teachers must be prepared and equipped to effect the needed change in the children. Teachers should be trained and this would be done through in-service training.
3. Multi-disciplining approach should be employed as a method of teaching citizenship education at the higher levels of education.

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