



EXPLORING CIVIC EDUCATION AND MAINTENANCE OF NIGERIA'S NATIONHOOD IN THE 21ST CENTURY AND BEYOND

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Abstract

Nigeria is a country of multi-ethnic nationalities. Since her independence in 1960, Nigeria has been struggling to sustain and maintain her much cherished nationhood though in the face of complexities and challenges of various dimensions. This paper attempts to explore the imperative of Civic Education to the maintenance of Nigeria's nationhood in the 21st century and beyond. It portrayed Civic Education as an essential tool for sustaining Nigeria's nationhood. A critical analysis of Civic Education in relation to Nigeria's nationhood is made and it was revealed that Civic Education is potent in establishing and sustaining a democratically, healthy and self-reliant Nigeria nation. Considering the relevance of Civic Education in the maintenance of Nigeria's nationhood in the 21st century and beyond, it should be a compulsory subject/course to be taught at all levels of academic endeavours among others.

Keywords: Civic Education, Nigeria's Nationhood, 21st Century.

Introduction

The emphasis placed on education in the training of learners to become good and responsible citizens in Nigeria is borne out of the fact that, education is considered as a potent instrument for change and development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Happenings and events in Nigeria recently have indicated that this nation is on the brink of losing its much cherished sense of nationhood and cultural identity; this is because corruption, indiscipline, disrespect to constituted authorities, insurgencies, non-commitment to duties and a host of social vices are some of the manifestations of negative values in the Nigerian society socially. The call for urgent value-reorientation is bringing about far reaching impact on national development in Nigeria.

Nigeria with a population of more than 160 million is considered as the most populous black nation in the world. The nation is vastly blessed with abundant human and material resources. However, Nigeria though a sovereign independent nation, is faced with series of challenges and problems that has slowed down her wheel of remarkable progress and developments over the years. Some of these challenges unfortunately, are self-inflicted and flow from a morbid, deviant inclination of the politicians to unjustly and blindly engage in self-enrichment and general corruption. Thus, there seems to be a desperate drive by Nigerian leaders to corruptly enrich themselves and save for future use in foreign accounts huge sums of money (Akinlotan, 2016).

Fayemi (2016) also revealed that leaders have turned themselves into owners of public funds and properties. Good and adequate healthcare is too costly to bear by a common man. Drug and human trafficking, advance fee fraud, anti-social and criminal activities are the order of the day. Many Nigerians have attributed these worrisome behaviours to socio-economic and political challenges tormenting the country coupled with an unstable economy, hunger, unreliable power supply, corruption in high places, poverty, mass unemployment and a dearth of social amenities. Social, civic, political and economic relationships in Nigeria are in fact defined more by mutual vulturous exploitation than anything else. People have succumbed to a feverish individualism that prioritizes the desire and gain of the individual no matter how illicitly pursued at the expense of the common good.

The decay in the society has reached the point that human life is expendable for material gain. The disturbing aspect of this development is that it is acceptable and has become the order of the day. People in Nigerian societies recognize and always praise those who perpetrate evil acts for money and power. Wealth is idolized and worshiped irrespective of how it was acquired. The aftermath of people's pervert attitude towards life has reflected in the demoralized state of the country. Social and political infrastructures have collapsed to the extent that maintenance has become a herculean task. Nobody engages in a meaningful and purposeful blueprint with the seriousness of mind to achieve specific public good and national interest. Wealth and money are considered as primary indicators of success at the expense of the common good as an anchor of public indicator of success in contemporary Nigerian societies (Fayemi, 2016).

Conceptual Clarification

The following concepts were explained to enhance proper understanding of the subject matter as they relate to this study. Such terms include Civic Education and Nigeria's Nationhood:

Civic Education

Civic Education is a discipline which aims at building an informed, responsible and morally-law abiding citizens as well as inculcating in the people a sense of commitment to the fundamental values and principles. Oyesiku (2010) defined Civic Education as a school subject which prepares people (students inclusive) of a country for their roles as citizens. Civic Education is the education that is concerned with the study of rights and duties of the citizen in a country. Civic Education is also the totality of education programmes in terms of knowledge and skills imparted on learners with the aim of making the citizens morally good and ready to render honest service to their nation. Through civic or citizens education, individuals acquire values and skills that will make them become effective and responsible citizens. It also inculcates the spirit of tolerance in the people and makes them have respect for other people's views, opinions and religion especially in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. Civic Education is also seen as the process of inculcating the basic ethics, ethos and morals into the learners to be good citizens that will exercise their rights and duties and respect others. In essence, Civic Education is a life-form of education which aims at preparing and inculcating in individuals societal values and norms to be responsible and responsive citizens in the society (Giddens & Sutton, 2010).

Civic objectives are the intended knowledge, actions and dispositions aimed and applied to relevant instructional settings. Civic objectives are the expected instructional/behavioural changes shown by learners due to classroom civic learning to develop effective citizenship (Ali, 2004). Well stated objectives are characterised by: (i) being learner-centred which expounds instructional activities that learners engage in with or without scaffolding during and after civic lessons (ii) focusing on developing civic learners' effective citizenship (cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains) components. That is, focusing on the three learning domains instead of stressing one above the others (Ololobou, 2010; Falade, 2011).

Goals of Civic Education

Civic Education goals in Nigeria have their origin in the general philosophy of education of the country and the national educational goals, such as: the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity; inculcation of the right values and attitudes; training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social ability for the development of the society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

In specific terms, the goals of Civic Education in Nigeria include:

- To acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that will prepare the young people to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives;
- To create an awareness of the provision of Nigerian constitution and the need for democracy;
- To crease adequate and functional political literates among Nigerian;
- To sensitize Nigerians to the functions and obligations of government;
- To inculcate in the child the spirit of self-discipline, hard work, cooperation and respect for authority; and

- To attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the need to implement critical elements of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) (NERDC, 2007).

Nigeria's Nationhood

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a multinational state, consisting of about two hundred and fifty ethnic nationalities with Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba as the major groups. Nigeria, as the world's thirty-second largest country, is sited on the West African Gulf of Guinea and equals the size of Venezuela, is nearly twice the state of California and one-third of Western Australia (Sofadekan, 2012; Bolaji, 2014, Idowu, 2015). Nigeria was christened by Flora Shaw, the wife of Sir Lord Lugard (the then Governor-General) of Nigeria. Nigeria was derived from two words, 'Niger' and 'area' implying the geographical land and people around the area of the river Niger (Meek, 1960). Geographically, Nigeria is situated alongside the West African coast, and is enclosed to the north by the Republics of Chad and Niger, to the west by Benin Republic, to the east by Cameroon and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. Demographically, it is the most populous black nation in the world with an estimated population of over 168,000,000 people occupying a land mass of 923,768 square kilometres (World Bank, 2013, Idowu, 2015).

Nigeria is a former British colony therefore; English is the official language of communication in government and education circles. Nigeria is a secular state with a large number of Muslims and Christians while a small minority practice African traditional religion. Despite gaining political independence in 1960, this multinational state still faces a plethora of citizenship (socio-political) issues hindering nation building and national development (Idowu, 2015). These issues include grasping the reality of its nationhood and not just a mere geographical expression (Awolowo, 1947), or a gathering of tribes (Anyako, 2011) or a casual, denigrated mechanism amalgamated by the Niger Delta crude oil, and a seeking of a common, national identity (Osundare, 2011). Also, appointing political officeholders based on zoning rather than merit deprived competent citizens the chance to exhibit patriotic zeal through public and political service. Besides, ethnic affiliation and loyalty are the order of the day in all parts of Nigeria's national life (Idowu, 2015).

Civic Education and Maintenance of Nigeria's Nationhood in the 21st Century and Beyond

There are evidences that no country has achieved the level of understanding and acceptance of rights and responsibilities among the generality of her citizens that is required for the sustenance and maintenance of good governance in a democracy. In Nigeria, the concept of integration has disappeared to give room for the concept of segregation as each ethnic group is conscious of the fact that, they are rivals-in-contest rather than partners-in-progress. With many years of democratic experience, governments have fallen short of consolidators and are assailed by centrifugal divisions, religious polarization, communal violence and debilitating intra-governmental conflicts. Therefore, in order to create a patriotic and responsible citizenry as well as strengthen and consolidate Nigeria's nationhood in the 21st century and beyond, Civic Education is essential. Civic Education comprises Civic knowledge, Civic disposition and Civic skills (Branson, 1998). Through civic knowledge, citizens discover their roles in the overall governance of their country. In order to guarantee freedom of expression, citizens actively participate in the nation's political processes.

Another essential component of Civic Education is civic disposition. It is the traits of private and public character essential to the sustenance and maintenance of constitutional democracy (Branson, 1998). Civic Education also enables the populace to know and imbibe the attitude and respect for others, listening to their opinions, behaving in a civil manner, considering the rights and interest of fellow citizens, being tolerant, cooperative and being a good brothers' keeper. Civic Education is a potential tool for achieving national unity, integration and national consciousness. This is because in Civic Education class, students are taught about the history of the country, the national leaders, national heroes, human rights and democratic principles. National consciousness connotes the feeling or love for one's country. The love of the country should therefore be paramount in the mind of the learners and individuals. National identity is a situation in which things are the same of alike. In this wise, people from a cultural group are different from another and easily be known because of some common characteristics they possess. For instance, the Igbos are different from the Yorubas. The Hausas are also different from the Igbos and Yorubas. The features that distinguish them are languages, mode of dressing, greetings, marriage practices, festivals, customs and traditions. Each ethnic group in Nigeria has its own specific cultural features that make it different from other ethnic groups.

One of the objectives of Civic Education is the inculcation of right types of values and attitude in the citizens for the growth of the society. Civic Education teaches value system in the society. Value is the actual worth of a thing or object. It is also a mere personal measure of worth, such as how important an individual considers certain things, beliefs, principles or ideas people attach to things based on their sense of value. Students are taught some values like integrity, truthfulness, fairness, responsibility, patriotism, dignity of labour, sincerity etc. They are also to know the importance of values system such as making decision, and how it allows individuals to act in accordance with our values. Conversely, negative values such as stealing, corruption, dishonesty, non-tolerance, hatred, inconsistency etc should be jettisoned (Kayode-Olawoyin. 2017).

Intellectual and participatory skills are the third but not the least component of Civic Education. This is because if citizens are to exercise their rights and discharge their responsibilities as members of democratic society, they need a body of knowledge and disposition that must manifest in skills (Branson, 1998). Similarly, students are taught the national symbols. The National symbols are traits of authority and identification of a country which reminds people that they all belong to the same country. National symbols in Nigeria include: the coats of arms, national flags, national currency, national passport, national anthem, national pledge etc.

Civic Education also helps to proffer lasting solutions to almost all obvious social, economic and political problems in Nigeria through teaching and encouragement of acceptable social values and behaviours in learners. Anti-social behaviours and moral decadence among Nigerians would drastically be reduced. Civic Education teaches high level of tolerance and respect for the views of the other people in the society. Learners who had been exposed to Civic Education would be able to tolerate other people's religions and ways of life. It will help citizens to internalize the cultural norms and value of the society. Kidnapping, banditry, religious intolerance, dishonesty, laziness, killing and maiming of innocent citizens and non-citizens, vandalism, and destruction of lives and properties are not part of Nigerians' cherished value system. All these should not be taken for granted in order

to help Nigeria to survive as an indivisible political entity characterised with multi-ethnic nationalities and cultures.

Civic Education also inculcates the necessary values in an individual for a lifelong and all round development (Falade & Adeyemi, 2015). It is discipline that encourages political stability, this is so because when people are well informed and young citizens who are being indoctrinated from their young days assume position of authority, they will not be like the set of representatives or senator who could throw chairs; they would be civil adults. They would also be citizens who can get involved in politics not for its gains but to share their wealth of experiences towards development. These would be adults who would believe politics is not a do-or-die affair but a service to humanity (Kayode-Olawoyin, 2017). Samuel (2011) also posited that good knowledge of Civic Education leads to sustainable development and maintains a better and improved Nigeria's nationhood. Popular participation of citizens in government will allow government to adopt policies and enact laws that are relevant to the development of the society. Civic Education will afford its learners to contribute their respective quotas to the sustenance of Nigeria as one indivisible political entity irrespective of tongues, tribes and/ religions.

Concluding Remarks

The importance of Civic Education cannot be over-emphasized. Civic Education learning is potent of establishing and sustaining a democratically, healthy and self-reliant Nigeria's nation. Hence, teachers of Civic Education should be well equipped with the necessary knowledge vis-a-vis skills and also exhibit good character traits so as to act as role models for the learners who are future leaders. Nigeria will also produce citizens who would be self-sufficient for a dynamic nation, and indeed, the objectives of a just and egalitarian state shall be achieved through a good internalization of Civic Education. Considering the relevance of Civic Education in the maintenance of Nigeria's nationhood, it should be a compulsory subject/course to be taught at all levels of academic endeavours. The maintenance of social and national consciousness meanwhile is the responsibility of all Nigerians which is easier carried out with a careful Civic Education learning.

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