Implementation of the Civic Education Curriculum for Effective Citizenship, Peace and National Unity in Nigeria

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Abstract

Peace and national unity will be achieved when citizens of the society understand societal problems and have the skills to resolve conflicts constructively, live by national standards for justice and equality and appreciate peoples’ diversity in a heterogeneous Nigeria. Nigeria is confronted with several problems which various formal and informal citizenship advocacy programmes have been unable to resolve due to implementation gaps. These failures led to the severing of citizenship issues from social studies to form a new subject called civic education and applied as a core subject at all levels of secondary education in Nigeria. This paper employed a systematic documents analysis of existing data in discussing implementation of Civic Education Curriculum (CEC) for the attainment of peace and national unity in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper explores the concept of civic education, civic education as a school subject and the implementation of the CEC components in relation to peace and national unity. Similarly, the paper discusses the implementation strategies including resources and personnel as well as the pedagogical skills to teach the subject and the evident implementation lapses. Finally, in consideration of the urgent need for Peace and national unity in Nigeria, the paper proffered some suggestions and highlighted strategies that may be useful to the successful implementation of the CEC by all stake holders towards the attainment of sustainable peace and unity in Nigeria.

Keywords: Civic Education, Curriculum, Peace and National Unity, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Since independence Nigeria has been unable to achieve sustainable nation building and development. This is due to issues such as ethnic polarization, long years of military rule and low levels of civic dispositions among other factors (Idowu, 2015). The state of peace and National unity in Nigeria remains a pre-occupying phenomenon to the rest of the world. Nigeria has gone through different forms of crises since independence in 1960 which signifies that the country has a long way to go in achieving peace. In the rural and urban areas, the country has experienced intermittent conflicts arising, in the case of the former, out of the struggle over grazing lands amongst neighboring communities whose life is based on livestock rearing. In the latter case, urban violence has become a permanent feature in most of the major urban areas, notably Lagos, Kano, Enugu, Kaduna, Abia and many others between Nigerians of different ethnic groups, religion and regional affiliations. Nigeria at different times also experienced pre-election and Post-election violence that was responsible for the deaths of many active citizens. The effects of all this violence are enormous. Including
many lost their lives; many other people were forced to flee from their homes. The affected persons also suffered from food shortage, displaced persons were traumatized and Schools were closed.

Nigeria faces various citizenship challenges involving youths’ apathy towards civic activities like voting in elections; moral deficit due to anti-social behaviors and inadequate interest in political engagement which could result in the failure of democracy (Hébert & Sears 2001; Bennett 2008; Osler & Starkey 2003). The Nigerian context revealed state concern for the youths who require serious transformation to become effective citizens. This overwhelming citizenship trend required introducing a particular school subject by which learners could develop traits of effective citizenship.

Thus, Nigeria needs human societies to move from violent and destructive patterns towards developing the potential for creative, constructive and non-violent capacities to deal with her current social and political issues. This is achievable if the government can embrace the role of civic education as a strategy for achieving a desired peace and national unity in Nigeria. In Nigeria, education is seen as the pivot of any meaningful development, be it social, economic, technological and political (Ezekwesili, 2006). Evidently, it is perceived not only as an instrument for accelerated national development but also the basis for the “Integration of individuals into sound and effective citizens” (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2013: p7).

The role of education in promoting civic competence seems to have been adequately reflected in relevant literature. It has been argued that any school subject in the educational system is capable of educating for citizenship depending on how it is taught (Odoh, 2000). However, other schools of thought believe that certain school subjects by virtue of their philosophy, nature, contents and methodological insights or approaches are better strategically positioned to provide effective citizenship education (Osho, 2002, Obebe, 2005). Civic Education is one of such subjects.

Therefore, this paper reviews some documents so as to discuss implementation of civic education for effective citizenship, peace and national unity in Nigeria.

CIVIC EDUCATION

Civic education, initially known as ‘civics’ originated from ‘civic’ and ‘civitas’ meaning ‘a citizen’ and ‘city-state’. It is an altruistic and moralistic term which initiates discussions of citizenship (socio-political) issues within the public (polis) domains of the state. From the classical Greek period it was a tool to inculcate socio-political culture by infusing loyalty to collective interests and participation in state matters as hallmarks of effective citizenship (Morris, 1997; Gleiber, 2003; Po, 2004). Traditionally, civic education is used to provide insights into political traditions, principles, institutions and engaging in the political system of the state. Also, it has been used to construct and impart knowledge and skills regarding rights and obligations in order to participate in the public life of the society (Branson, 1998; Lewis, 2007; Aroge, 2012). It is an organised body of knowledge involving individuals and group memberships rights and duties, linked with citizenship of a state (Shah, et al, 2002; Gold cited in Meron, 2006; Gelaneh, 2012). Overall, civic education depicts the link which young learners should have with the current political system of the state.
CIVIC EDUCATION AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT IN NIGERIA

As portrayed in the civic curriculum objectives, Nigerian government indented using the subject as a tool to develop knowledge and skills regarding voting, governmental roles, citizens' rights, duties, values, ecological activism, community services and social networking for future citizenship engagement. Yet, the lack of extracurricular programmes could hinder the required experiential learning while in school (NERDC, 2013; Miles, 2006; Falade, 2007; Lopez et al, 2006; Ogunyemi, 2005, 2011). Currently, the Objective of Civic Education in Nigeria include:

a) Acquiring and learning to use the skill, dispositions, knowledge and values which prepare learners to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives;

b) Attaining the Millennium Development Goals and the need to implement the critical element of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies;

c) Creating awareness on the provisions of the Nigerian constitution and the need for democracy;

d) Creating adequate and functional political literates among Nigerians;

e) Sensitizing Nigerians on the functions and obligations of government;

f) Inculcating in the child the spirit of self-discipline, hard work, cooperation and respect for authority;

g) Promoting the understanding of the inter-relationship between man/woman, the government and the society;

h) Highlighting the structure of government, its functions and the responsibilities of government to the people and vice-versa;

i) Enhancing the teaching and learning of emerging issues;

j) Inculcating in students their duties and obligations to society (NERDC, 2013).

CIVIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM CONTENT

The civic education curriculum content contains issues germane to developing effective citizenship as indicated in the National curriculum for Junior and Senior Secondary School. The content covers ten themes involving:

i. Values

ii. Citizenship

iii. National consciousness and national unity

iv. Human rights and rule of law

v. Representative democracy

vi. Duties and obligations of citizens

vii. Nigerian constitution

viii. Social issues

ix. Peace and conflict resolutions

The above content is a multi and inter disciplinary, learner-centred, interactive, activity/issues–based curriculum. Young learners are to be exposed to total learning experiences which reflect depth, appropriateness, and inter-relatedness of knowledge. Citizenship issues are presented in logical and sequential order of themes which ensures continuity of citizenship issues. Moreover, the curriculum shows flexibility by enabling the civic teacher to introduce creativity and adaptability into the civic education content.

**EFFECTIVE CITIZENSHIP**

Effective citizenship is the degree of knowledge, dispositions and skills developed by learners to engage in diverse citizenship activities at local, national and global levels. It involves learning and demonstrating diverse citizenship traits through actual participation in ecological activism, community service and showing interest in state activities (Andrews et al. 2008; Okeahialam, 2013). A broader view of effective citizenship involves mediating learners’ knowledge, ability and dispositions to participate constructively within a multicultural milieu in order to confront personal and collective problems inter alia, in that setting (Reimers, 2006).

Effective citizenship can be seen as learners’ conceptions of how to improve quality of life, through involvement in formal and informal activities with the overall goal of contributing to Nigeria's citizenship growth.

**CIVIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM (CEC) IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA**

Nigerian studies agreed that civic education curriculum (CEC) programme implementation, as in other developing democracies, is a major issue. Most curricula implementation has been mere declamatory without actual impact on the school, young learners and society. This is due to the lacuna between policy intents/objectives and actual classroom implementations due to bureaucratic barriers affecting our overall development (Obanya 2007; Ejere, 2011; Bolaji, 2014).

Implementing civic curriculum documents within the school context involve classroom interactive activities. The civic teacher (as facilitator) translates formally approved contents (a syllabus) into schemes of work and lessons notes to guide learners to construct knowledge and develop skills and dispositions (Chikumbi and Makamure 2000; Obanya, 2004; Garba, 2004; Onyeachu, 2008). The implementation process involves turning CEC objectives and content into practice through a process starting from the civic teacher designing the civic scheme of work, instructional materials, pedagogical methods and conducive classroom interactive setting and ending with learners acquiring and constructing (via the intended curriculum) concepts, skills, and dispositions aimed at effective participation in society. This makes civic learners the basic stakeholders in the civic curriculum implementation process. However, effective implementation of CEC should shift from the intended to learned curriculum when civic learners reflect traits of effective citizenship (Okebukola, 2004; Ivowi, 2004; Obanya, 2007).

Finally, the general policy implementation issues pari-pasu (side by side) with the classroom implementation process discussed above justified exploring the translation of civic curriculum as a school subject into classroom/school actualisation.
THE NEED OF CIVIC EDUCATION FOR PEACE AND NATIONAL UNITY IN NIGERIA

The aims of teaching civic in schools among other things are to develop and transform Nigerian youths into effective and responsible citizens. Citizens who are law abiding and knowledgeable in institutions of governance and democratic processes (Centre for civic education, 1991). It is also envisaged that civic education will help young people to develop a sense of loyalty, honesty, discipline, courage, patriotism which are the essential requirements for effective and functional citizenship in a democratic setting (NCSS, 1994).

These aforementioned goals, vividly reflect the essential components of civic education namely civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition (Centre for civic education, 1994). Civic knowledge is concerned with the subject matter of what citizens ought to know about civil life, politics and by implication the roles of citizens in a democracy. Civic skills include intellectual and participatory skills of critical thinking and other related ones involving identifying, describing, analysing and evaluating which are essential for an informed responsible citizen. Civic dispositions on the other hand, are traits which are developed overtime as a result of learning and experiences at home, schools, community, organizations and civil society. These promote certain democratic values such as moral responsibility, self-discipline, respect for human dignity, civility and rule of law (Centre for Civic Education, 1994).

Nigeria also needs Civic Education to correct her societal ills. Events of the recent past have shown that Nigeria is on the brink of losing its much cherished sense of nationhood, cultural identity and indeed, hospitable spirit. The prevalent trend of corruption, indiscipline, disrespect for both elders and the rule of law, non-commitment to duty are some of the manifestations of negative values in the Nigerian Society. These call for urgent value reorientation because of their far reaching impact on national development.

Furthermore, the need for Civic Education in Nigeria is fundamental because it teaches the right attitudes to students and pupils. Laziness, truancy, keeping bad company, drug abuse, bribery, and so forth, should be discouraged, while hard work, truth, integrity, loyalty should be encouraged. Citizens should do away with bad behaviours such as: indecent dressing, cheating in examinations, stealing, bullying others, and the likes (Oyelami, Abayomi, and Olatunde, 2011).

In addition, and more importantly, Civic Education has the objective of exposing students and the general public to various ways of achieving community and national development, such as right values, religious tolerance, rights and duties of citizens, among other things. All these will enhance the capacity of an individual to contribute to community, national and global development (Olayemi, Abayomi, and Olatunde, 2011).

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING CEC FOR NATIONAL UNITY

To successfully translate civic education curriculum objectives into classroom implementation for the attainment of required peace and National Unity in Nigeria, relevant stakeholders should ensure compliance to the following policy statements:
a) The government should promote the training of Teachers and Administrators towards civic education and democratic interactions as the leading agenda of Teacher education programs.

b) Policy-makers in the education sector should make sure that the problem of paucity of materials for teaching and learning of Civic Education is done away with. This will facilitate easy comprehension and speedy inculcation of Civic Knowledge in Nigerian citizens.

c) The government should enhance the quality of education by expanding access to education, enrolment, and reduction in education wastage.

d) The role of civic Education must be activated by the government, awareness strategies to be adopted and proper strategies for coordinating and collaborating all the initiators of civic education to be enhanced.

e) In-house courses, seminars and workshops should be organized from time to time by the Ministries of Education (Federal and States) for all teachers of Civic Education in order to give them quality training for the development of Civic Education.

f) Voluntary organizations, religious and professional bodies should be encouraged to plan and organize leadership and Civic Education courses for youths, especially when they are on school vocation.

g) Parents should be encouraged to enable their children participate in Civic Education programmes even during holidays like the Boys Scout, Girls Bridged e.t.c, this will go a long way in facilitating national development in the country.

h) Teaching and learning of Civic Education in the country should be extended to post-secondary levels and to cover people in all walks of life in order to achieve national development. Owing to this, we recommend that the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should handle the task of giving Civic Education to non-students.

CONCLUSIONS

Civic Education is geared towards helping Nigeria as a state to live in unity and harmony as one “indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of justice, freedom and equality’. Thus, civic education if effectively taught can encourage the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen as well as promote peace and National Unity in Nigeria. Suggested CEC and implementation strategies if fully implemented would pave way for the production of effective citizens capable of contributing to the attainment of peace and National unity in Nigeria.

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