



Citizenship Education as a Connecting Rod for National Security in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the relevance of Citizenship Education to National Security. Citizenship Education is designed to expose the students to the basic concepts, principles and provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as amended and to create awareness and consciousness of Nigerian political institutions, structures, democratic and social values in the minds of students. The paper defines the concept of Citizenship Education as the process of sensitizing, educating and mobilizing the citizenry with a view to inculcating discipline, patriotism, nationalism and social responsibility, in the mind of the citizens towards achieving a just, progressive, and disciplined nation. It also defines National Security as the ability of a given state to overcome any of its challenges. The challenges could be internal or external aggression, unemployment, scarcity of water, food, environmental issues, health, energy, education, natural disaster and development. The paper stresses how the ignorance of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended, rigging of election, abuse of power, corruption and other anti-social vices that cause national insecurity could be reduced by Citizenship Education. The paper concludes that citizenship education is the catalyst to national security and development of any nation.

Keywords: Citizenship Education, National Security, Constitution.

INTRODUCTION

Citizenship Education is the very root of National Security. The patriotism and nationalism of any nation is predicated upon the level of citizenship education achieved. The fundamental question which citizens raise is: Has the government discharged its responsibility as enshrined in section 14 (2) (b) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as amended which provides that “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government.”

National Security is the ability of a state to overcome any of its challenges such as unemployment, provision of water, food scarcity, environmental protection, power supply, good roads, education, health, decent houses, natural disasters and development. National security transcends defense and military might, it is of no meaning to the unemployed youths and hungry citizens that form the majority of the population in Nigeria who resort to crimes such as kidnapping and armed robbery.

It was based on the importance of citizenship education that the Federal Government of Nigeria made the teaching and learning of citizenship education compulsory in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria with a view to providing a dependable leverage for national security.

In Nigeria, security takes the lion's share of our national budget. Unfortunately, there is no amount of billions of naira the government would spend on national security that would guarantee water-tight security Nigeria except the government provides for the welfare of the citizens.

Citizens seek commission in the armed forces not because they want to serve the nation but because they think it is the best way to accumulate political power and wealth and probably earn a living. This is also detrimental to national security. Where the citizens have no security of their lives and property; are molested in pursuit of

their occupation by which they earn their living and are not free to use the road because of high crime rates and intimidating attitude of security agents, the security of the nation will be threatened. However, for the purpose of this paper, we intend to concentrate on the relevance of citizenship education to national security, in doing this, we also intend to highlight the concepts of citizenship education and national security.

The function of citizenship education in Nigeria is to expose the citizens to the basic concepts, principles and provisions of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended and to create awareness and consciousness of Nigeria political institutions, structures, democratic and social values in the minds of the citizens.

Besides, citizenship education teaches the citizens to know their fundamental rights and duties as good citizens. Also, it teaches the citizens fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy of Nigeria, the need for free and fair elections and some methods of environmental protection and it also teaches the citizens to understand and respect constituted authority.

The Relevance of Citizenship Education to National Security

Citizenship education makes the citizens to understand the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended and abides by it, respect its ideals, aid its institutions, the national flag, the national anthem, the national pledge, aid legitimate authorities. If the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is guilty of gross misconduct in the performance of functions of his office, he could be impeached as provided for in section 143 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The citizens would not resort to self help for removing the President by violence or force which will threaten national security. If the citizens are ignorance of the constitution they could remove the president by violence or force without constitutional means. This will lead to total breakdown of law and order and this could lead to chaos and national insecurity in Nigeria.

Also, citizenship education teaches the citizens to participate in the making of the constitution that guides them, must be consulted before their constitution is drafted and be citizens not subjects who shall be subordinate to the laws of the land. Furthermore, citizenship education makes the citizens to know their fundamental rights and perform their fundamental duties as good citizens. Section 38 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended, provides for right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. If thoughts of the citizens are suppressed and they are not free to state their cases, if they are not satisfied with the policies of the government, it might lead to national insecurity.

When citizens are terrorized for daring to express themselves it could lead to national insecurity because terror does not alter opinion, it only drives the opinion underground thereby making it more dangerous. Those who oppose freedom of opinion are losers because the silenced opinion may contain a portion of truth after all in classic phrase; the heresies of today are the orthodoxies of tomorrow.

Besides, citizenship education teaches the citizens the importance of free and fair elections. The need for free and fair elections is predicated upon democratic principles and social justice. Sovereignty or ultimate power in the country belongs to the people, exercisable by them by way of the constitution and their votes during elections. The citizens have political right that is the right to vote and to be voted for in an election if they have the pre-requisite requirements. With free and fair elections, citizens are not excluded from power and benefits of power. It makes citizens to see themselves as joint owners of the polity having hands in the elections of their leaders.

There is need for free and fair election because government is by consent of the people. Before any person or group of persons takes control of the government, the peoples consent should be sought genuinely. The general will of the people should be recognized through free and fair elections. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended provides for free and fair election. In Nigeria, the only legitimate way any person or group of persons could take control of the government that is in accordance with the constitution is through free and fair election. To this extent, Section 1(2) of the constitution recognizes free and fair election as means of taking control of government in accordance with constitution.

Citizenship education makes the citizens to know that the constitution outlaws rigging of election, revolutions, coup d'état or any other form of takeover of government by violence or force. However, it is sad that despite these beautiful provisions of the constitution, they have not been able to stop rigging of elections in Nigeria.

Where there is no free and fair election the National security is threatened because there is tendency for groups in the society to resist the state morally and consequently engage in guerilla warfare to dislodge the de-facto leaders out of office. This affects national security.

With the aid of citizenship education, free and fair election make citizens to throw out never do well leaders. Citizens are aware that leaders cannot make a caricature of democracy as they succeed themselves with undue processes. The citizens know that their political right cannot be rubbished. Their rights to vote and be voted for cannot be abdicated. Any attempt to abdicate their right to vote and be voted for and disallowed to participate in the political process, National security will be threatened.

Fundamentally, citizenship education has helped the citizens to shun corruption. It teaches the citizens evils of corruption and its attendant effects. Corruption in Nigeria has lowered the respect Nigerians have for constituted authority and undermines the credibility and legitimacy of the government.

Also it teaches the citizens that corruption has slowed down the efficiency and productivity of civil servants in Nigeria and has also contributed to political, social and economic decay, that have led to national insecurity. Corruption also scares away potential investors from the country and portrays the nation in bad light to the international communities. Corruption slows down the rate of development in Nigeria. The state funds or huge oil revenue that should have been used to develop Nigeria are either embezzled or transferred to private accounts abroad. Against this backdrop, the country is left bankrupt and riddled with diseases and hunger. The citizens on the other hand are disillusioned, discontented and malnourished. There is an air of uncertainty and insecurity in Nigeria. Citizens have been reduced to mere walking corpses. Corruption has caused havoc on the psyche of the Nigerian citizens. Corruption contributes to national insecurity.

Citizenship education teaches the citizen their economic right to participate in running of the national economy. Where citizens are not given opportunity to participate in the running of their economy it could lead to national insecurity.

Federal Government of Nigeria through the Bureau of Public Enterprise (BPE) has conceded almost all the federal government owned corporations to private hands who no doubts make such sale and conversion to themselves at a giveaway price. This could cause national insecurity in Nigeria. The Nigerian economy is now capital driven economy, which is controlled by the bourgeois and compradors. This could lead to national insecurity.

Where the Federal Government of Nigeria has totally lost focus and completely confused to know and determine what basic price and amenities is, so as to cushion and mitigate the harsh effects of economic trends on the common Nigerian citizens that could lead to national insecurity.

No matter the quality and quantity of citizenship education the citizen would receive where the citizens have no food on their tables, leave in house not fit for beast, social infrastructure, necessities of life such as water, road, energy and medical facilities are far beyond their reach and completely lacking and it shows on the faces of the citizens that they are suffering untold hardship from rising cost of living and additional burden of fuel scarcity and its sky rocketed prices, for Nigeria being the sixth largest producers of oil in the world it might lead to national insecurity.

Citizenship education teaches the citizens the responsibility of the government to provide qualitative education. It is unfortunate that public schools meant for the children are lacking basic amenities and infrastructure that enhance learning.

Enabling environment that makes learning conducive is lacking and political leaders send their wards abroad for education. This could ignite national insecurity. Over the years, citizenship education in Nigeria has been faced with many obstacles. Among the problems ravaging citizenship education are non availability of enough qualified manpower to teach the course and reception of citizenship education lectures by students with a nonchalant shrug.

Conceptual Issues

For the purpose of this work two basic concepts: citizenship education and national security are clarified for easy comprehension.

Citizenship Education

Citizenship education can be conceptualized as the systematic process through which the young people acquire or internalize the values, norms and sentiments of the society in which they live and actively get involved to ensure that the common goal of citizens of the society is catered for including resisting anti social vices and misguided youthful exuberances (Osakwe and Itedjere, 1993)

Okorodudu (1996) opines that citizenship education is "a process of spreading the ideas or knowledge of citizenship skills, traits and abilities required for the provision of adequate development of the nation and members of the diverse Nigeria communities".

According to Aluyor (1986) citizenship education is "an academic discipline which teaches or trains the individuals on how to be intellectually, morally, spiritually, physically relevant and beneficial to self and the society. It is the scientific study of modern government, the rights, duties and obligation of citizen in a country. Anaveerokhail (2001) defines citizenship education as the scientific study of government, duties and obligations of citizens in any given state.

Iyamu (1995) opines that citizenship education emerges when, a nation or social groups or organization put together a set of training activities for the citizens or members in order to help them become more responsible, responsive, creative and patriotic.

In our own view, citizenship education –is the process of sensitizing, educating and mobilizing the citizenry, with a view to inculcating discipline, patriotism, nationalism and social responsibility in them to achieving a just, progressive and disciplined nation (Agiri, 2012).

National Security

Some see national security in terms of a nation's military capabilities or the struggle to overcome internal and external aggression, (Rumala, 2012).

National security transcends nations military might to subdue internal and external aggression. National security is the ability of a state to overcome any of its challenges, (Iredia, 2011).

This definition is wider in the sense that national security is the ability of a given state to overcome any of its challenges. The challenges could be unemployment, water, food scarcity, environmental issues, education, health, decent houses, natural disasters and development.

In 1990, Harvard Professor, Charles Maler described national security as "a capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes necessary to its own self determination or autonomy, prosperity and well being".

In 2010, American President Barack Obama canvassed an all encompassing world view in his own definition of America's national security interest which included "a strong innovative and growing United States economy in an open international economic system that provides opportunity and prosperity". Here Obama emphasized national security to be a vibrant United States economy in an open international system that will enhance the welfare of his people. He did not mention defense and military might.

National security is the requirements to maintain the survival of a nation through the USC of economic power diplomacy (Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia).

CONCLUSION

There is convincing and sustainable evidence that citizenship education is the catalyst to national security and development of any nation. It has exposed the citizens to the 'basic concepts, principles and provisions of the Constitution of the "Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended and created awareness, and consciousness of Nigeria political institutions, structure, democratic and social value on the minds of the citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommends as follows:

- Only holders of good degrees in political science and or related discipline should be engaged to teach

- citizenship education.
- Students should be counseled on the need for effective citizenship education.
- Citizenship education should be given high priority in the higher institutions of learning curricula in Nigeria with a view to sensitizing, educating and preparing citizens for sustainable national security.

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