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Country Report: Citizenship Education and Curriculum Development in Nigeria

The article highlights the evolutionary trends of citizenship education in Nigeria. The 1914 British amalgamation of erstwhile Northern and Southern Protectorates gave birth to Nigeria as a state. The disparate ethnic composition of the new state, especially after independence, necessitated finding a common ground to promote committed citizens, against primordial ethnic cleavages and indigenization. It is not therefore surprising that the role of education in fostering national citizenship and consciousness was emphasized.

Initially, social studies was used as a curriculum framework, until lately when a new subject, civics, was created in primary and junior secondary schools. The author considers the historical, cultural and political context underlining these curricular changes and identifies the current and future challenges face by the implementation of Civics curricular in Nigerian schools.

Keywords:

curriculum, citizenship, civics, social studies

Introduction

The conception of democracy in the ancient Greek city state of Athens and the manner it was practiced, with exclusion of certain segment of society namely women, slaves, aliens and peasants -has inspired the notion of citizenship may be far beyond the intention of the ancient Athenians. Historically, Athens left a legacy of democracy and citizenship to the modern world. With the decline of ancient Athens and the rise of Roman Empire, the concept of citizenship assumed wider focus and state decline was attributed to bad citizenship. In the modern age, the complexities of interests within nation-state, high crime rate, civilization, terrorism and failed state phenomenon, make citizenship education an imperative. Without any sense of contradiction, citizens need to be educated and be informed about the governing process, the rights they are to demand from the state and the responsibility required of them. Both the state and the citizens should fulfill their part of the social contract. Dustin (1999) put it clearly while articulating the works of J. J Rousseau on the imperative of citizenship education. He affirmed that:

"there can be no patriotism without liberty, no liberty without virtue, no virtue without citizens; create citizens, and you have everything you need; without them you have nothing but debased slaves, from the rulers of the state downwards. To form citizens is not the work of a day, and in order to have men (sic!) it is necessary to educate them when they are children." (Dustin, 1999, 7).

The wave of democratization across the globe contributed to the spreading of citizenship especially in Africa, where such idea was termed foreign and exotic. African lived pure communal life, and as such the concept of indigenization was widely embraced. Citizenship, like capitalism and liberalization was a by product of democracy. With Nigeria obtaining political independence from Britain in 1960, the drive

towards attainment of nationhood and democratization, the notion of citizenship rights became more pronounced. The awareness of being a separate sovereign nation as opposed to being a British colony stimulated defining a new identity. In this article, I attempt to trace the challenge of the Nigeria nation and the official response to use school and its curriculum to achieve the educational goals which, undoubtedly, derived from national goals. What are the views of the Nigerian scholars on the concept of citizenship education?

Ozumba and Eteng (1999, 25) explained citizenship education as the "totality of learning, instruction, equipping, which citizens need to be able to play his/her role, discharge his/her responsibilities, know his/her rights, understand his/her country-the constitution, the politics, the ethics, the religious, the ethos and the ideals that make the national geo-political entity". Fadeiye (1995) opines that citizenship education is the kind of education given to the citizens of a country with a view to making them responsible people, capable of contributing meaningfully, to the overall development of their country. Citizenship education is then designed to make learners identify and exercise their civic and political rights and also willingly accept to perform their civic and political responsibilities. But these assumptions must take into account the specificities of Nigeria's historical, cultural and political context.

1. The Institution of Nigeria and the Goals of Citizenship Education

Nigeria is made up of disparate ethnic nationalities with diverse values and cultural inclination. There are about 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria. Before the advent of colonialism, these groups were administered under a differing administrative system: in the North, the predominant Hausa/Fulani operated a centralized Emirate system headed by Emir; in the Yoruba dominated Western region, the monarchical system of government combined with some elements of liberal republicanism was being operated - Oba had no ab-



solite power, but customarily checked by kingmakers who are replica of modern legislators. In the Eastern region, the administrative system was acephalous, there were no visible traditional rulers but a variation of republicanism. The concept of indigenization was a dominant force as against citizenship. The resultant effect was primordial cleavages to ethnic cause and aspirations even after 1914 amalgamation of erstwhile Northern and Southern protectorates, and even till post independent Nigeria. The historical events had a profound influence on nationalism and attainment of real nationhood and citizenship. A Yoruba man, for instance, most likely primarily own allegiance to Yoruba cause before national consideration. The same attitude manifests among other ethnic groups. This makes the concept of citizenship blurred, fluid imagined rather reality.

British policy did not help the situation either. The policy of divide and rule perpetually created a division between the north and south. The Land and Native Rights Ordinance of 1910 promoted segregation and threat to nationhood. The Ordinance discouraged free migration of southerners to the north. The Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) (2000, 57) observed that,

“those citizens who are indigenes of other state are less favoured. The least privileged are those citizens who are unable to prove that they belong to a community indigenes to any state in Nigeria, and women who married to men from states other than their own. Such multiple system of citizenship inevitably endangers discrimination in jobs, land purchases, housing, admission to education institutions, marriages, business transactions and the distribution of social welfare”.

Many scholars have adduced ideal focal point of citizenship education in Nigeria. The nature of curriculum content vis a vis the recipients was a major concern shortly after independence in October 1st 1960. The initial school curriculum was heavily dominated by the influence of the colonial master-Britain 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 is partly due to enormous British influence on Nigeria education system (Fafunwa, 1974; Makinde, 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) describe the products of colonial education as though African in colour, but British in intellect and outlook. To restructure the curriculum towards underlining Nigerian cultural values and aspirations, 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 a form of citizenship education (Fafunwa, 1974; Yusuf, 1985).

Additionally, 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, religion and values system. The rate of religious and ethnic conflict is alarming. The political crises of 1960s has ethnic and religious undertone. The crises culminated into a civil war between 1967 and 1970. Other examples of ethno-religious conflict include Kasuwan Magani conflicts in 1980, Kafanchan crisis of 1987, Zango Kataf in 1984 and 1992, Tafawa Balewa crisis in 1991, etc. Political rivalry among ethnic groups has also led to the series of crises such as Kano riots in 1953, Tivs uprising in 1964, Western crisis in 1952, Ogoni rights movement in 1990s, etc. In response to this, some scholars have argued that school curriculum must be redesigned to promote national unity, religious tolerance, socio-political and cultural integration (Awosolu, 1993; Metziebi, Domite, 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. In reference to Daverger, Agi (1999) declared that the potentials to making citizens aware of the need to diminish divisive antagonism and promote material links that unite people, and the development of a sense of community among ethnic nationalism that constitute a state are two major functions of citizenship education.

Another area of concern is values orientation and inculcation. This aspect is clearly reflected in the new Civics curriculum for primary and junior secondary schools. Baike (2000) observed that, for curriculum to promote the ideal of democracy, the focus should not be limited to the development of intellect but also “development of character and respect for constituted authority.” This school of thought argued for the inculcation of African traditional values such as honesty, communalism which is a core aspect of active citizenship, togetherness, integrated family system, mutual and cooperative efforts, respect for elder and constituted authority, and loyalty to a collective cause. Obike (1993) stressed that citizenship education should teach attitude and values that will foster the ideal of democratic practices, national consciousness and patriotism. He submitted that, people’s values orientation explains their attitude and action, and determines services rendered to fellow citizens. Yusuf (2005) noted that value education is an integral part of citizenship education. Bearing in mind that values



system determines actions and shapes individual direction, the promotion of values in the citizens will inspire nation-building. Conversely, citizenship education which trains 'good' citizens (i.e., citizens who are aware of the human and political issues at stake in their society or nation) requires from each citizen ethical and moral qualities. According to this perspective, all forms of citizenship education should promote respects for others and recognition of the quality of all human beings, and aim at combating all forms of discrimination (racist, gender-based, religious, ethnic, education etc.) by fostering the spirit of tolerance and peace among human beings.

Human rights orientation also enjoys a wider focus among Nigerian writers especially among the texts used in secondary schools. Okom (1999) emphasized how citizenship status involves conferment of rights on some individuals while others who are denied their rights in the society and access to resources is scarce - such as the peasants, aliens, women and slaves in Ancient Greek city states. For Nigerian citizens, understanding of his/her rights and duties should be a vital part of civic education curriculum. Thus, we when speak of purposes to be ascribed to citizenship education (comprising knowledge of the social and political rights of all human beings and their recognition), we inevitably end up with the complementarities between citizenship and human rights. Bearing in mind these complementarities, citizenship education means not only 'educating citizens', but also educating children for adulthood and citizenship, citizens who are not ignorant of their rights and are willing to perform their civic obligations. Moreover, human right includes civil, social and political rights, the later obviously relating to the rights and obligations of citizens. Thus a comprehensive human rights education takes citizenship into account, and considers that good citizenship is concerned with human rights as a whole.

2. The Curriculum Framework and Citizenship Education

The focus on curriculum development on citizenship education in Nigeria was comparatively low compared to literacy, arts, science and even technology. Even though, it was implicitly addressed in the recommendation of 1969 National Curriculum Conference, the objective of good citizenship was lumped among other objectives in Social Studies Education.

The National Curriculum Conference took place November in 1969 at the National Assembly, Hall Lagos. As a follow-up to this conference was a National Seminar took place in 1973, where the recommendations of the 1969 National Conference were discussed and eventually crystallized into the adoption of a National Policy on Education. The policy was first published in 1977 and subsequent editions were published

in 1981 and 2004. Some of the core recommendation of 1969 National Conference was the basis of discussion in 1973 seminar. Some of the core recommendations that form the foundation for citizenship education are recommendations 3 and 7. Recommendation 3 states that "Nigeria education should be geared towards self-realization, better human relationships; self and national economic efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity" and recommendation 7 emphasizes that primary education should serve to help the child towards self-realization and to relate to others through mutual understanding, effective citizenship through civil responsibility, social and political awakening (Adaralegbe 1972). Apart from these recommendations the goals of the Second National Development Plan which was later adopted as the National goals gave credence and impetus to incorporation of citizenship education into curriculum. The National goals are:

- a. a free and democratic society
- b. a just and egalitarian society
- c. a united, strong and self-reliant nation
- d. a great and dynamic economy; and
- e. a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (NPE,2004).

The two recommendations and the national goals formed the basis of citizenship education in Nigeria. When the curriculum was fully developed into a rational package, Social Studies, taught in Primary and Junior Secondary Schools, was designed to cater for aspect of citizenship education (FGN 2007). The specific objectives of Social Studies include promoting a broader understanding of the physical, economic, social, and cultural environments, develop, encourage and strengthen pupils' enquiring minds and help teachers and pupils discover what is good and unique in the physical, social, economic and cultural traditions which hitherto have been implied or neglected

It is noteworthy that the curriculum addresses some fundamental issues regards the learning of citizenship that include operational definitions of citizenship, mode of acquisition, fundamental rights and duties of citizens, and national symbols. However, the curriculum content has been observed to lack depth and the teaching methods were traditional, teacher-centered with little or no practical application in the school ethos and practices. The mode of evaluation is pen and paper system in which, in most cases students respond to questions after memorizing concepts. This negatively impacts the classroom teachings (Marinho 2009) as the commonplace experience is that after examination, students easily forget everything they have learnt even if they have performed averagely or brilliantly well during examinations. This portrays gross deficiency in the system.



The objective is invariably reduced to mere passing examination without the personal integration of ideals for active citizenship. Marinho (2009, 7) wrote further that, “the new curriculum fails to take into account useful pedagogical methods that assist in achieving goals ... Modes of teaching are outdated ...” The assessment usually fails to measure whether citizens actually practice democratic values in their relationships, attitudes and outlook. How do we assess whether a child has internalized democratic values? Is it through pen and paper mode of assessment? Could the successful internalization of values taught be a basis for selecting school prefects? Or these values are set as criteria for nominating eligible prefects and those who fall into the inclusion criteria go through election process? Obviously, there is no national or school based benchmark to ascertain the internalization of democratic values and achievement of citizenship education curriculum goal.

A critical examination of existing textbooks also shows the shallowness of the content as most are limited to a mere definition of contents. Even at higher institutions where citizenship education is taught as a general course, the content is limited to some basic concepts in political science which are taught in a separate subject (Government) at secondary school level. For the sake of emphasis, topics such as Organs of Government, concepts such as Democracy, Monarchy, Socialism, Political Party and Party System: Power and Authority are predominantly the focus of the curriculum. In addition, Nigeria political experience and social life possesses greater challenges that using the curriculum might amount to handling the issues of nation building with kid glove in the light of past frequent military intervention in politics among other challenges. In 1999, the country returned to civil rule after prolonged successive military misrule. The nascent democracy is however characterized by all sorts of semi-democracy or pseudo-democracy traits such as electoral malpractices, ethno-religious conflicts, primitive accumulation of wealth at the expense of the state by the political class and election malpractices. Ijalaye (2009) comment on 2007 general election shed light on the nature of past elections in Nigeria. He observed that election rigging through the combined power of incumbency by government and political party in power has always been a regular feature in the election process in Nigeria. However, there was beacon of light from the 2011 general election. It was adjudged by national and international observers as the most free and fair election ever conducted in Ni-

geria. However, the spate of corruption in Nigeria is alarming and pervades every aspect of National life from the technocrats to the politicians. Infrastructures are at low ebbs and citizens’ disposition to taking care of public facilities is best described as non-chalant (Adebayo, 1986; Iroanusi, 2006; Ajibewa, 2006; Magstadt, 2009).

To sustain and consolidate the democracy, citizens must be taught and made to internalize the purpose of democracy. Values such as liberty, service, justice, religious equality, and tolerance among others must be inculcated. Negative traits such as religious violence, armed robbery, ritual killings, electoral malpractices, official corruption must be condemned and isolated from private and national life. Citizens must come to the realization of the fact that democratic values are not embedded in genetic code. They evolve over time and each generation can decide their values and their preferred models of society.

A major innovation towards learning citizenship and ideals of representative democracy is the introduction of Civics Education into primary and junior secondary schools in 2007. The existing Social Studies curriculum has undergone major restructuring. Aspects of citizenship education in the Social Studies curriculum for junior secondary school were completely disarticulated and a separate subject termed Civics was designed targeted towards amelioration of the vices stated above and promotion of active citizenship.

In the part of the introductory message by Professor Godswill Obioma – the Executive Secretary of Educational Research and Development Council (the body in –charge of curriculum Development in Nigeria), he noted that; the curriculum reflects depths, appropriateness, and inter-relations of the curriculum contents. It was introduced to attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and by extension, the need to implement the core focus of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDs), which are value orientation, poverty eradication, job creation, wealth generation and using education to empower people.

A critical observation of the curriculum package shows the will to translate the intentions of the government into an institutional expression in the school where students would be taught basic values and ideals that would presumably make them responsible citizens

The themes covered in the curriculum package are shown in tables below:



Table 1: Primary School Civics Curriculum

| Grade | Topics |
|---------------|---|
| Primary One | Civic Education, National Symbol, Good Social Behaviour and Health Issues |
| Primary Two | Civic Education, The school, Community and Health Issues |
| Primary Three | Civic Education, National Consciousness, Duties and Responsibilities and Health Issues |
| Primary Four | Our Values, Citizenship, National Consciousness, Duties and Responsibilities, Government, Constituted Authority, Social Issues and Health Issues |
| Primary Five | Civic Education, Our Values, Citizenship, National Consciousness, Duties and Responsibilities, Government, Representative Democracy and Civil Society and Popular Participation |
| Primary Six | Civic Education, Values, National Consciousness and Identity, Government and Civil Society and Popular Participation |

Source: Nigerian Educational and Research Development Council, 2007

Table 2: Junior Secondary Civics Curriculum

| Grade | Topics |
|--------|---|
| J.S. 1 | Citizenship, National Consciousness and Identity, Representative Democracy, Nigerian Constitution, Human Rights, Rights and Obligation of Nigerian Citizens and Social Issues |
| J.S. 2 | Our Values, Citizenship, Rights and the Rule of Law, Nigerian Constitution and Social Issues |
| J.S. 3 | Human Rights and the Rule of Law, Nigerian Constitution, Representative Democracy, Duties and Responsibilities of Citizens, Social Issues, National Economic Life and Peace and Conflicts |

Source: Nigerian Educational and Research Development Council, 2007

A survey was carried out by the author to determine the perceived effectiveness of the new initiative on Civics curriculum in primary and junior secondary schools. The core focus was to examine the relative effectiveness of the proposed Civics in comparison with the existing Social Studies curriculum. A random sampling of one hundred and fifty (150) Social Studies teachers who are also expected to teach the proposed Civics education subject was made. At least at present, no provision is made towards the training of new specialists. Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents agreed that the curriculum content of the new sub-

ject – Civics is more robust on democratic issues than the existing Social Studies. The probable reason may be due to the eclectic, integrative nature of Social Studies, in which the focus on the aspects of learning active citizenship may be shallow while attempting to provide curriculum balancing to other thematic focus. However, fifty five percent (55%) of the teachers argued that there is no need to create a new subject, but rather that Social Studies could have been strengthened in terms of depth in the curriculum content and improved methodology. The supporting argument is that the school time table is already over crowded, to the extent that there is no provision for the new Civics in the School Board Assessment broad sheet. Twenty five percent (25%) of the respondents agreed to a separate subject framework in which Civics is separated from Social Studies, while twenty percent (20%) maintained a neutral position. It is the opinion of the author that integration should have been vigorously pursued. I strongly recommend that aside making an integral part of Social Studies in primary and secondary schools, teaching and learning citizenship should cut across separate subject orientations and spread across various school subjects such as language, health education, physical and biological sciences.

3. Conclusion and Future Directions

The efforts of the government and its agencies responsible for the curriculum innovation are commendable, however some fundamental issues are yet to be resolved, mainly regarding the articulation between the philosophy of the curriculum and the challenges faced by the Nigerian democracy.

Are students who are predominantly the main target group for the curriculum innovation in the position to avert undemocratic social order? If perhaps the overriding objective is to secure the future through education of the younger generation, what about the overriding influence of the society on the school community? Experience has shown over time that, students learn from what goes on in the society, an influence that seems to be more normative and stronger than set of values being expounded to them by teachers in schools. Instance where school children internalized and overtly practice anti-democratic traits prevailing in their immediate society contrary to what was taught in the classroom supports this observation (Oyeleke, 2011).

The reform which the innovation seeks to support is vague to the teachers who are to catalyze the required change and also to the generality of the citizens. Information management system is a key to success in planning and if people are part of the change process, adaptation becomes much easier. The level of consultation to the stakeholders during the process of designing the curriculum is at zero level when con-



sidering the new initiatives on the Civics curriculum for the primary and secondary school. One would have expected teachers, relevant professional associations, parents associations, academics and relevant educational institutes to feature in the development process. Keeping teachers abreast of the changes is a key factor to success. Moreover, in some instances, research shows that teachers have assessed themselves as having inadequate knowledge of civics and citizenship education (Mkpa, 1997; Ugwu, 2005; Eseh, 2005, Oloruntegbe et al, 2010).

Styles of teachings should also become more open. Efforts should be made to re-training teachers to embrace styles, approaches and strategies that do not endanger the curriculum content. One may be tempted to ask why, in spite of vigorous campaign for innovation and changes in the school, are the proposed changes not implemented? Why are teachers still clinging to the usual traditional approach to leadership and methodology in the classroom? Does their training and orientation support changes and innovation? A teacher trained under authoritarian style will find it difficult to adopt open, democratic system. What has never been experienced can never be given.

Finally, does the school ethos and culture reinforce or hinder democratic practices? The school ethos, belief system, structures and practices may either reinforce or hinder the teaching of democratic values. The authoritarian styles of principals and teachers in our schools should be subjected to review by formulating a scaffolding policy to strengthen the internalization

of democratic values and ideals in civics classes. School should be “socially just” and avoid anti-democratic ‘norms’ such as religious, ethnic or gender discrimination, authoritarian modes of selecting school prefects, cultural and ethnicity bias, differences arising from learners’ geographical location and socio-economic background. Democratic ideas should not be limited to curriculum provisions and pedagogy, but also the real, contextual practice in the school environment. Authoritarian schools cannot deliver democratic civic education. School should embrace student-centered orientations and become democratic institutions.

Curriculum development in Nigeria is a product of various compelling forces including British Ordinance, Military Decree, research findings, and societal outcry. Occasionally, some of these forces are borne out parochial interest. However, the domain of citizenship education is somewhat different. It is unique in the sense that it is intended to serve collective, national interest. The effort of the federal government is highly commendable in taking steps toward the teaching and learning of citizenship. Innovation should be an on-going process in order to keep pace with dynamism of our ever-changing society. Moreover, as Ehindero (1996) clearly observed, “no curriculum is fault free”. This calls for constant review. The Civics curricula should neither be reduced to a mere booklet without proper implementation nor should be conceived and used as a tool for political manipulations, but as an agent of positive social transformation.



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