

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT: Since the attainment of independence in 1960, the cry for national integration has remained loud among Nigerians. This might be because of certain presumed defects in the nature of our federation. The call for nation building involves providing among other important things quality education which over the years have deteriorated. The call is also loud on providing a kind of education that will do bring the citizenry to proper knowledge of the society, hence the teaching of citizenship. This paper is central on the Concepts of Citizenship Education, quality assurance and national integration. The paper examines the nature of citizenship education system offered in the country; it discussed the importance of citizenship education to national integration and finally concluded by making some suggestions.

Keywords: Citizenship Education, Quality Assurance, National Integration

INTRODUCTION

The general failure of systems in the country is no longer new; this is because quality is no longer observed in our daily life. At various levels of our societal life be it industrial, political, academic/educational social and cultural people are more concerned about what 'goes' not how it goes. Citizens are mainly proud to say they have some rights but hardly do they speak of their responsibilities talk less of ensuring the right thing at the right place.

One major problem that still bedeviled our societies till date is that of not only proper but qualitative education and that has largely affected national integration. A society that lacks sound citizenship education, its members are most likely to behave in unpatriotic, indiscipline and corrupt ways. The general decadence in the moral life of our society reflects the loose degree of the national integration as sections of the country are struggling to secede or go into confederal system. History of western education in Nigeria has it that until most recent years the teaching of subjects like; history, civic education, citizenship education aim at inculcating national feeling and responsibility in younger people. Despite the inclusion of these subjects ensuring quality in teaching becomes a major issue.

This paper is therefore timely as it sought to fill the existing gap on the problems that our society faces resulting from dissemination of inadequate and un qualitative citizenship

education. The inculcation of a quality assured citizenship education will no doubt enhance national integration.

Conceptual clarifications

Citizenship education Citizenship refers to the state of belonging to a particular socio-political or national community. The concept citizenship offered itself to different meanings depending on the context of usage. In general terms citizenship is the status enjoyed by nationals of a country which entitles them to full legal, economic, social and political rights (Oyeneye;et'al, 2006:65). By this it implies that citizens of a country or community legally has very significant rights that he/she enjoys and unless otherwise cannot be denied of him/her. Olagunjuet'al, (2009: 11) view citizen as a true and legal member of a country. He or she has rights and responsibilities in that country where he or she lives. Thus, citizenship is membership in a community, society or country. Therefore, for a citizen to effectively enjoy his/her stay in the community there is the need for citizenship education.

Citizenship education therefore refers to an educational activity that aims at preparing individuals to become actively informed and responsible citizens (Salihu;et'al, 2011: 37). Thus, citizenship education is a process of inculcating in individuals certain very significant cultural behaviors, knowledge and values. It is somehow perceived as indoctrinating individuals in things considered as society's basic values. Citizenship education equips individuals with pertinent knowledge and skills that will enable one to contribute meaningfully to the development and progress of a changing modern world.

Quality, to some is like 'beauty' that lies in the hands of the beholder! The word quality comes from the Latin "quails" meaning what kind of. The British Standard Institution (BSI) defines quality "as the totality of features and characteristics of a product or services that bears on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs" (BSI: 1991). The UNESCO thus defines quality assurance as the systematic review of educational programme to ensure that acceptable standard of education, scholarship and infrastructures are being maintained. Quality assurance is the responsibility of everyone in the education industry, (Okojie, 2008). Assuring quality should be a continuous and ongoing process. In a nutshell quality assurance is about doing the right thing, the right way. It is about keeping to standard and maintaining standard through due process and inspection.

Harman (1998) note that across the world, quality assurance is observed in the following ways:

- Self evaluation
- Peer review mechanism by a panel of experts
- Analysis of statistical information and/or use of performance indicators or the best practices benchmarking
- Survey of students, graduates, employers, professional bodies
- Testing the knowledge, skills and competencies of student. (Harman 1998).

Where best practices are into play, quality is assured and that will bring about progress and development in the society at large and even the individual in particular. There is no doubt that the application of quality assurance mechanisms to our educational industry will increase our capacity and ensure a stronger united country.

National integration is the awareness of a common identity among citizens of a country. It means that though we belong to different religions, tribe, regions and cultural backgrounds but, we recognize the fact that we are one. This kind of integration is very important in building a strong and prosperous nation (Shona: 2014). National integration may also mean unifying all the forces in the country so as to give the idea of one nation. In many parts of the world what is done for national integration and unity is not insurgence, arbitrariness to rule of law or call for disintegration but, for peoples that have a course to be one, they accommodate. The diversities of Nigerian state calls for accommodation of each other's culture and proper education of the citizenry. The significance of national integration is over whelming as succinctly put by Usman Y.B, (1980:115). The issue of national cohesion is important because without forging much greater cohesion at all levels we cannot use even one-tenth of one per cent of all our resources to improve the miserable living conditions of our people. Without much greater national integration we cannot build the social economic and political foundation on which to promote and defend our dignity and independence and indeed our survival as one country.

Citizenship Education in Nigerian schools

The National policy on education provides for the teaching of citizenship education, generally the principal justification for it derives from the nature of our democracy which needs actively responsible citizens. It needs citizens who are willing and able to take

responsibility for themselves and their community and can contribute positively to the political process. Specifically, some of the goals of citizenship education include;

1. To prepare one to actively and effectively participate in the socio-political life of one's society.
2. To enable an individual have information about the benefits and challenges of his environment or society.
3. To produce individuals that will adopt or fit into the social realities of their own environment and contribute to the needs of the society.
4. To enable one become amenable to social control.
5. To enable individuals acquire skills, competencies, attitudes and values that are crucial for effective living in the society.
6. Finally, to prepare one for social responsibility, encompassing willingness and actual performance of such social responsibilities.

Given the goals of citizenship education, it is important to highlight some of the rights, duties and obligations of the citizen in the society so as to understand their relevance to national integration in the light of quality assurance driven society. Also, that a clearer picture of how these concepts can help improve on national integration for the purpose of building a more stronger and virile nation. Some of the rights of a citizen are:

- Right to life
- Right to education
- Right to opinion/freedom of express
- Right to vote and be voted for
- Right to equality before the law
- Right to freedom of movement and association
- Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion

The duties and obligations of citizens are things an individual owes his/her country in order to fully enjoy the rights he/she possesses some of these include;

- Loyalty to his community and the government of his country
- Obedience to all the laws, rules and regulations made by the government of his country.
- Payment of tax as at when due.
- Vote during elections
- Must take good care and protect public property

- Citizen must help law enforcement agencies in the fight against crime
- Respect national flag, symbols and anthem
- Where necessary a good citizen should defend his country against international external aggression.

The role of education is therefore indispensable as it is a necessary tool for transformation and improvement of human society. It is through a qualitative citizenship education that members of the society can be cultured into being good citizens. However, recent developments in the society at large and education sector in particular have called for the inculcation of the philosophy of quality assurance in our daily life. Garvin (1988) classified the various definitions of quality into five groups:

1. Transcendent definition. These are subjective and personal. They are related to concepts such as beauty and love.
2. Product-based definitions. Quality is seen as measurable variables. The basis for measurement is objective attribute of the product.
3. User based definition. Quality is a means for customer satisfaction. This makes the definitions individual and partly subjective.
4. Manufacturing based definitions. Quality is seen as conformance to requirement and specifications.
5. Value-based definitions. These definition, defines quality in relation to costs. Quality is seen as providing good value to costs.

Quality has a few central ideas on which the whole concept revolves; quality as absolute, quality as relative, and quality as a process and quality as culture.

When quality is considered as absolute then it implies the highest standard. For instance, the Igbo Ukwu bronze figurines found in Ancient Eastern Nigeria, the Nok Culture of Central Nigeria area, or the Pyramids of Egypt are all works of high standard and quality. Educational institutions such as the University of Ife, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Oxford and Harvard Universities have made their names based on absolute quality standard, though in the case of education it might still be perceptual. Thus, quality of a product can be described in relative terms. Quality in this regard can be measured in terms of certain specifications (Mishra, 2006). Mulchopodhyay (2005) believes the adherence to product specification is actually the minimum conditions for quality, but not the sufficient condition. The sufficient condition is customer satisfaction and beyond (p.19).

Quality as a culture recognizes the importance of organizational view of quality as a process of transformation, where each entity is concerned and acknowledges the importance of quality. Therefore the maintenance of desired level of quality in a service or product especially by means of attention to every stage of the process of delivery or production is imperative. Thus, quality assurance is very important in production, service and even more importantly education. Okojie,(2008) put it as “the process of evaluation, maintenance and promotion of quality within education industry”.

Quality assurance is a 20th century phenomena which started in the industry and management. It became an issue with the advent of industrialization and adoption of new scientific approach to management based on strict division of labour. The stage necessitated the need for inspection of products to ensure they met specifications before they left the factory. This came to be known as quality control. In the initial days of quality movement in United States and Japan statistical approaches ruled but, since the post world war era focus was extended from engineering to theory of management (Mishra 2006). In Nigeria, quality assurance in the education sector (universities) began in 1990 after the minimum academic standard were developed for all programmes existing in Nigerian universities at that time (Okojie, 2008). Today most of our institutions, organizations and industries have quality assurance unit with the sole aim of doing the right thing the right way.

Various happenings in Nigeria have since the attainment of political independence posed serious threat to the nation’s unity and co-operate existence. It is a common calling that Nigeria should call a national sovereign conference because the apologist’s belief our national politics is far below their expectations; crisis of different dimensions have bedeviled the nation, corruption, discrimination and abuse of rule of law and other factors that are dysfunctional to national unity are common features in the country. The unity and integration of Nigeria is everyday challenged by many centrifugal forces. Most of the issues raised in some quotas that are working against our national unity and integration are based on false notion. As (Chiroma; 1999:19-20) observed, we need to wake up to keep the nation together he asserted that: The tendency fed by current difficulties to lose faith in the feasibility and future of Nigeria as a United nation-state is based in very large measure on a number of false notions which need to be clearly identified and frankly confronted if we are to achieve any success in transcending them and resolving the problems of unity which they help to fuel.

Citizenship Education and National Integration

National Integration can be attained through a quality assured citizenship education in no small measures. The United Nations Education and Scientific Organization (UNESCO, 1995) outlined the following sustainable future working of citizenship education.

- A willingness to investigate issues in the local, school and under community
- A readiness to recognize social, economic, ecological and political dimensions of issues needed to resolve them.
- The ability to analyze issues and to participate in action aimed at achieving a sustainable future.

Developing these skills in the realm of citizenship education is indeed necessary for democratic citizenship and one of the defining features of a sustainable society. Therefore with proper evaluation, monitoring and inspection, quality teaching will take place and better aware citizens will be produced. One of the major problems of the society is the total neglect of quality in education. Most of the problems we are faced with are largely caused by either ignorance or wrong notion on issues thus people tend to behave in unethical manners. The teaching of Citizenship education in our Schools will help in no small measures change attitudes and biases. People will learn about other people's culture and thereby respect each other.

Citizenship education if properly disseminated will surely enlighten members of the society on their basic responsibilities and obligations to the society. People are mainly concerned about what the governments have to do for them but hardly do they know that we all are the government. For any government to be successful it needs the cooperation of the citizenry. That can only be attained when citizens are adequately educated on their rights, duties and responsibilities.

When African countries gained independence from their colonial masters they were faced with a mammoth task of nation building and education was seen as a transformative tool for development (Verspoor, 2008). This was a challenge in that they had inherited underdeveloped education systems with inadequate human resource capacity (Stampf, 1996). In addressing the issue of relevance, two divergent perspectives emerged; one based on the role of education as transformative, liberating and empowering (Samoff, 1999). This view put

emphasis on education helping students to understand their society in order to change and focus on innovation and experimentation. On the other, how education was viewed as skills development and preparation for the world of work (Samoff, 1999). This view puts emphasis on providing students with skills to enable them to fit in the labor market.

Though the transformative view of education was seen to be empowering and liberating it remained a minority view. The second view became the dominant one as exemplified by education for self reliance in Nigeria. In this case education was seen as preparation for the world of work hence students were to be provided with skills that met the labor market needs within the society. Since attaining independence, these Nigeria have undergone some grand metamorphosis to respond to the needs and realities of the nation. However, critics have argued that the notion of relevance to national needs has been construed narrowly in terms of improving the standard of living and the development of the nation's spiritual and material lives and this has led to schools limiting the learners' aspirations to develop strategies and tools for acquiring knowledge, generating ideas or crafting critiques hence rendering citizenship education an illusion rather than a reality Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman 1994, Iris Mario, Young 1989.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Citizenship education is a necessary tool for the transformation of the society; it transmits the core values to the younger generation. The task of nation building and national integration is a continuous one therefore, the need for citizenship education.

National integration is dependent largely on the quality of education of the citizenry. Societies with high quality education like the United States of America and Western Europe tend to have lesser challenges of national integration because large proportion of the populace do not only know their rights and duties but they religiously perform their obligations.

Finally, I submit by saying that for purposeful national integration, qualitative citizenship education is given at all levels of our education including the informal sector. The syllabus needs to be improved upon to cover wider areas of our national needs. Where possible, citizenship should be developed into a discipline to make up for the short comings of subjects like; Social Studies, Civics and to some extent History.

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