

## **ENHANCING CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AS A TOOL AGAINST INSECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper advocates for enhancing citizenship education, which has the potential to reform, resocialize, and resensitize youths to the need to abandon their destructive, retaliatory, and violent activities that threaten Nigeria's statehood. It aims to foster democratic values and civic responsibilities through citizenship education. The question of insecurity challenges in Nigeria is becoming worrisome as vicious groups are now mushrooming day by day in our society, posing an unimaginable vicious threat that rocks the peaceful existence of members of the society. Given the state we have found ourselves in, we urgently need to enhance citizenship education as a tool against these insecurity challenges. This is because many Nigerians are bitter, always in a disposition to attack the state and its people due to their frustration, anger, and disbelief against the government and statehood. Given the efficacy of citizenship education, as surveyed in literature review, it is a tool in fostering ideal civic attitude and competence, it is therefore pertinent for the subject to be enhanced upon to produce citizens with the right psyche, consciousness, disposition, and mentality that will not only uphold the ideals of democracy, promote human rights and the principle of equality, but also appreciate the gift of diversity and participate actively towards building a society that is safe, peaceful and prosperous. Therefore, this paper dealt with the goals of citizenship education, empirical evidence on the effect of citizenship education, the challenges of teaching citizenship education, the way forward to enhance citizenship education, and conclusion-bearing recommendations.

**Keywords:** Citizenship Education, Insecurity in Nigeria, Democratic Values, Youth Resocialization, Civic Responsibility

### **INTRODUCTION**

To what extent can Citizenship education be considered the socialisation process in which the young of a politically organised society acquire the education that would make them clear-thinking and enlightened citizens who participate in decisions concerning society (UNESCO, 2010)? As part of citizenship education, the knowledge of the social system, its institutions, the operation of the rule of law, and social interaction is required to make a citizen a whole in society. Citizenship

education trains citizens on pursuing morals, ethics, and values that are indispensable for the good living of all in society. Citizenship education involves the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, and skills as a qualification to effectively participate in the civic affairs of a social system. Being a legal member of a politically organised society, one is required to perform some duties and obligations that are geared towards promoting a safe, stable, and harmonious society. Obligations are borne out of goodwill and impact on one's moral conscience; all these are such that citizenship education is determined to propagate to the citizenry. Statehood can only be stable, protected, safe, and progressive when all hands are on deck. Every citizen in a nation has roles to perform towards its nation-building and therefore needs capable role players for a strong and reliable nation. To maximise their civic potential fully, the citizens need to be equipped with the right psyche, awareness, disposition, and mentality that will not only uphold the ideals of stable, peaceful and progressive society, promote human rights and the principle of equality, but also appreciate the gift of diversity and participate actively towards building a dynamic society. No one gives what he does not have. Effective and relevant education for citizenship is, therefore, compulsory for all and sundry in a society, particularly the youth in this contemporary era when things are not only in disarray but all tribes and ethnicities in Nigeria are pitched in reprisal and mutual attacks. Presently, insecurity and crimes in Nigeria have snowballed to a hydra-headed level. Measures to deal with them should include aggressive and effective citizenship education at all levels of education to reach the entire citizenry, especially the young in society. The present rise in insecurity in Plateau, Benue, and other states, where several communities have been attacked, scores of people maimed or killed, should call for much worry. This insecurity linked to the playing of politics of vendetta, evident in the encouragement, recruitment, and sponsoring of political propagandists and thugs to maim and kill their rivals (Undie, 2016). These political godfathers have monopolised political power and influence in the oppression of others (Enu, Undie, Odey, 2019).

While security apparatuses should be stepped up, education has been confirmed. It remains a veritable tool to correct social problems. So, it should be effectively deployed to combat this complex security phenomenon because it is the youth who perpetrate this, and who are supposed to be the cornerstone and vehicle of growth and development in every society (Undie & Asinde, 2021). Nigerians are quick to copy various habits, lifestyles, and practices from the western world through the internet, films, and television, which so many have negatively impacted us, as our moral values and cultural values have become corrupted by the Western values, thereby bringing into the society untold woes (Undie, Aboh & Omang, 2025; Essien & Undie, 2019). This influence can be linked to these insecurity incidents in Nigeria.

### **Goals of Citizenship Education**

Citizenship education is a subject that has the curricular assignment of achieving the following goals, according to Learn African (2011):

- To enable the learner to understand the universal citizenship of all societies in the world community and develop a supportive attitude towards solving worldwide problems across countries or continents, for example, the bird flu, HIV/AIDS, global warming, and global economic meltdown.

- To inculcate the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values about the workings of democratic government and promote the passage of these from one generation to another.
- To enable learners to identify emerging issues or problems in different societies and to acquire knowledge, skills, and values to solve them.
- To ensure that individuals develop a new participant orientation, which is required for the smooth running of a democratic system of government after a long period of military rule in Nigeria.
- To develop a positive attitude and values that would promote active participation in the affairs of society.
- To acquire knowledge about citizens' rights and duties, as well as citizenship acquisition laws and processes.
- To develop skills for effective participation as citizens of a politically organised society at different levels.
- To enable learners to develop citizenship consciousness in their politically organised society and develop patriotic zeal to commit themselves to serve the state and, if need be, make the supreme sacrifice in the service of their state or humanity.
- To enable the child or learner to acquire relevant knowledge about the affairs of a politically organised society at all levels, including the immediate local community, district, local government, state, the whole community, and the world community.

### **Empirical evidence on the impact of citizenship education in society**

Evidence has confirmed the effects of citizenship education in solving numerous societal problems. This evidence is emerging from research work.

Some international evidence has shown that levels of knowledge and attitude towards democracy and democratic participation were correlated; it was found that these variables had a significant correlation (Jerome, 2020; Nelson et al, 2010). Similarly, Nelson's longitudinal study tracked the first eight years of this. It concluded that there were positive outcomes when citizenship education was consistently taught to the students on the weekly timetable. According to Keating (2010), a longitudinal study included over 18,000 secondary students, and it was concluded that if the students are taught with high-quality teaching, their civic participation would be improved.

Whiteley (2014) also analysed survey data from over 3000 young people from across England, Scotland, and Wales and found that there was also a positive correlation. Suffice to say, these researchers have given us invaluable insights into the influence of citizenship education in ameliorating societal problems. Jerome et al also concurred with this assertion that these researchers have given us "a glimpse into what a more consistently developed citizenship education provision might bring about".

Contrasting these studies, Keating and Janmaat (2016) had the advantage of studying a crop of students who were being tracked after the longitudinal study. This sample was smaller than Whiteley's study. The students could identify their experiences concerning specific aspects of citizenship activities, including school councils, mock elections, and debating clubs. It was concluded in this study that young people who experienced these forms of citizenship education

towards the end of their secondary school age were more civically competent, considering their level of civic participation activities.

Association for Citizenship Teaching (2025) has also asserted that there exist evidence-informed arguments born out of encouraging school leaders to consider supporting citizenship education. That research in England demonstrates positive outcomes into adulthood; boosts political knowledge, efficacy, trust, tolerance, and attitudes towards democracy.

Conflicting with the above empirical evidence, and asserting differently, Hoskin et al (2012) analysed an older international dataset and concluded that the most important factors that promote an ideal civic attitude is interaction with parents, teachers, and peers, also emphasising how significant informal interactions are outside of school. Their participation in the school council also shapes their civic attitude.

Even in social studies, the citizenship education it teaches has the potency to reform the mind, disposition, habits, beliefs, and orientations of the citizens so that they do not indulge in activities that cause security challenges in the country (Essien & Undie, 2019).

All this research evidence has given insight into the various impacts of citizenship education internationally.

### **Challenges in the teaching of citizenship education**

There are challenges in the teaching of citizenship education, just like in other areas of study. These challenges are as they are perceived or experienced. We may have common challenges, some of which are peculiar to a place. Here are some challenges in teaching citizenship education as categorised here.

Institutional challenges emanate from the school. We have an overloaded curriculum for citizenship education, which hinders the exhaustion of the syllabus before a session ends. The school timetable is bloated with numerous subjects, each with inadequate duration. This inadequate duration hinders the achievement of the stated objectives (Undie, Omang, Ikpo, 2025).

Citizenship education competes with other subjects, especially social studies, which were balkanised to have civic education that is also designed to teach it.

Limited resources here cover inadequate instructional facilities and technologies needed for effective teaching and learning of citizenship education. All are needed in simulation and alternative channels of communication. Inadequate resource allocation to the education sector worsens this reality.

Poor teacher training and its resultant incompetence are another serious challenge. Many teachers lack professional training in citizenship education and also lack effective assessment methods for measuring citizenship skills. Due to poor training, many teachers, sometimes together with their students, lack digital literacy: these skills are requisite to function in a modern classroom.

So many societies, like Nigeria, are plural societies with a grave issue of diversity, which always poses challenges to citizenship education. Stereotyping and prejudice held by students loyal to their ethnicity and tribe call for concern. The fight for ethnic superiority breeds mutual suspicion, ethno-religious conflicts, and cultural diversity, hindering national unity. Consequently, an attempt to balance these diverse values and norms from these ethnic groups and tribes poses a grave challenge to citizenship education.

Corruption is one of the challenges that has made citizens lose confidence and trust in government and its institutions, especially those responsible for the socialisation of citizens, like the National Orientation Agency. While government functionaries are busy perpetuating all manner of corruption in government offices, you cannot turn the followers away from it; it causes disengagement and apathy. This situation will certainly precipitate the prevalence of crime in our society, as children will conspicuously be seen imitating and displaying all sorts of fraudulent behaviour in society (Enu, Undie, & Unimke, 2019).

The media disseminate misinformation that often contradicts reality in society. Many media houses are under the control of the government. The government says what it does not practise in governance, and so it pays these media operators to propagate its propaganda.

Again, the present hardship in Nigeria has precipitated an avalanche of poverty that has driven so many into unimaginable vices. So many economic activities of the youth are questionable. The spate of incidents of internet crime has snowballed on an unprecedented scale in Nigeria. These vices that the youth perpetrate are a war against citizenship education.

Partisan politics of teachers may introduce biased teaching and curriculum content execution by the teachers. Some teach to favour the political party in power. This disrupts and robs the achievement of citizenship education objectives.

The lack of political will causes governments to prioritise other issues over citizenship education. Many government actions undermine democratic values, which poses a challenge to the achievement of citizenship education.

### **Way forward on how to improve citizenship education in schools to meet the present security challenges in Nigeria**

Citizenship education needs to be taught in a manner that strikes a link between knowledge and practice (UNESCO, 2010). This stresses that security tips should be demonstrated either through simulation and games or by setting up a mock insecurity challenge where both the instructor and the learners participate actively to learn the requisite manipulative skills needed in an insecurity challenge.

The present insecurity challenges in Nigeria, including militancy, kidnapping, vandalism, terrorism, and hostage-keeping, should be discussed, reflected on, and studied in each course of citizenship education (UNESCO, 2010), which will be remarkably beneficial in reinforcing security knowledge.

Citizenship education should be organised to serve as a forum for the discussion of insecurity challenges and other social issues, which tasks the learners' intellects with evolving solutions or answers to problems arising from insecurity challenges.

Non-homogeneity in culture, values, belief systems, and religious institutions is a source of the insecurity challenges we experience in our daily existence in Nigeria. Since it is as such, discussion on social issues in a multicultural citizenship education should be a new form of action to combat the aforementioned factors since this is frequently due to the ignorance in which children are nurtured and orientated in respect of the aforementioned factors apart from what would usher in social peace, tolerance, accommodation, cooperation and collective commitment in the shared responsibility of building a humane society of our dreams devoid of insecurity challenges (UNESCO, 2010).

UNESCO asserted that multicultural life in the classroom fortifies children against despising others and hostile indifference, both of which are sources of behaviour that stir up insecurity. If children become accustomed to discussing their differences in a rational way in the primary years, they are more likely to accept them as normal in their adolescence (Citizenship Foundation, 2015).

Citizenship education should address the differences between individuals and citizens to create a framework for addressing global peace, economic stability, environmental sustainability, and other issues that can help prevent insecurity challenges.

Quality education is the source of all development in the life of an individual and the nation. This has informed that citizenship education should form a never-do-without part of the education programme.

To address the insecurity challenges in our society, dogmatism should be prohibited in a democratic culture (Civic class). Instead, methods and approaches should be those that owe so much to discussion among learners and between teachers and learners, in addition to drawings, songs, and poems that revolve around the portrait of evil associated with insecurity challenges.

Citizenship education helps equip young people to deal with conflict situations and controversial knowledge and be tolerant since they are more like a herd of sheep grazing in an indefinite direction, likely to be entangled in self-destructive and anti-development activities (Enu, Undie & Odey, 2016).

It should be taught to equip learners to understand the consequences of their actions and those of the adults around them that may create insecurity challenges (Citizenship Foundation, 2015).

The source went further to advise that citizenship education be taught to learners so that they may learn to recognise bias, evaluate arguments, weigh evidence, look for alternative interpretations, viewpoints, and sources of evidence, and above all, give good reasons for what they say and do and expect good reasons from others. This helps to prevent insecurity challenges in our society.



Citizenship education teaches skills that help one to prevent insecurity challenges. These skills have to be taught diligently to achieve that end. Thus, UNESCO (2015: 1) stated the following, which reveals the role of citizenship education in improving the present insecurity challenges in Nigeria:

“We, the Ministers of Education (of the World), strive resolutely to pay special attention to improving the content of textbooks and other educational materials, including new technologies, to educate caring and responsible citizens committed to peace, human rights, democracy and sustainable development; open to other cultures; able to appreciate the value of freedom; respectful of human dignity and differences; and able to prevent conflict or resolve it non-violent means.” |

It is undoubtedly known that idle youths are tools in the hands of recruiters of terrorists. Citizenship education provides an opportunity where the youth become economically empowered, as this helps the labour market to become broader for them (Undie, 2015).

Furthermore, these idle youths lack civic consciousness, lest they commit such heinous crimes against man and society at large. To confirm this, Iyamu and Obiunu (2005) asserted that there is a general apprehension that the youths are at a greater risk while the scholars are on vacation. Most Nigerian children during school vacation are often left at home with their parents away for work or business. During the school period, the teachers provide some supervision for the children. Consequently, the children are at risk while on vacation, as they are sometimes exposed to negative influences in the absence of their parents or more mature individuals to control or protect them.”

Citizenship education has the potential to positively impact the students’ values, orientation, disposition, character moulding, and personality development (Iyamu & Ibiunu, 2005), which can help reduce the rate of insecurity challenges we face in Nigeria.

Brown (2011) stated that citizenship education embodies the other aspects of everyday life and that the subject “has the power to motivate and educate young people into becoming thoughtful, active citizens who engage with and participate in public life.” Participating in public life makes them see the need to eschew anything that causes insecurity or challenges in society.

To prevent insecurity challenges from flourishing in Nigeria, citizenship education should be taught so that citizens may be aware of the human and political issues at stake in their society or nation. It will require each citizen to have ethical and moral qualities and foster a spirit of tolerance and peace among citizens.

Equally important is that students should be taught how to investigate and enquire into topical, ethical, moral, and controversial issues that border on insecurity challenges in Nigerian society. This will, in a way, pre-empt or reduce the incidence of insecurity, which poses a social threat.

The improvement of citizenship education in schools should not be lopsided. It should also be made to improve specialist citizenship teachers' distinctive knowledge, skills, and dispositions and to have a strong sense of the specific potential and importance of the work (Peterson, 2011). In the same vein, teachers are to use topical political and social issues to bring citizenship content to life and help develop key citizenship skills of research, discussion, and debate, as well as to represent the views of others, think critically, evaluate, and reflect on insecurity challenges in Nigeria.

Further, the citizenship curriculum should aim to develop students' ability to participate in communities and wider society as informed, critical, and responsible citizens. Also, to work together and take practical action, using their citizenship knowledge and understanding to contribute to a better society. It is these that are necessary to curb insecurity challenges in society by producing positive citizens with a positive mindset, rather than delinquent, amoral citizens who have the potential to unleash untold disaster on society.

Citizenship education should be taught in such a manner that citizens acquire knowledge about the law, justice, inequality, and what some might call causes of dissatisfaction that make the aggrieved restive, thereby being a challenge to national peace, security, and unity (Democratic Life, 2016).

Improving Citizenship Education to meet the present insecurity challenges in Nigeria must also produce a crop of citizens who are socially and morally responsible, who are involved in solving community issues and education at home (Rob Van Otterdijk, 2016).

Given the magnitude of citizenship education's role in correcting a myriad of civic problems, it should become imperative that educators, policymakers, and members of civil society support and improve citizenship education in all segments of society and from the widest range of institutions and governments (Branson, 1998).

Citizenship education should be designed to address controversial issues in our society, including those that border on security challenges. Students should be prepared to deal with insecurity challenges knowledgeably (Citizenship JP, 2004).

## **Conclusion**

The question of insecurity challenges in Nigeria is becoming as worrisome as vicious groups are now mushrooming day by day in our society, posing an unimaginable vicious threat that rocks the peaceful existence of members of society. Given the state we have found ourselves in, there is an urgent need to improve citizenship education in schools to meet the present insecurity challenges we experience daily in Nigeria. This is because so many Nigerians are bitter, always predisposed to attack the state and its people in response to the frustration, anger, and disbelief they hold against the government. Citizenship education should be improved upon to produce citizens with the right psyche, consciousness, disposition and mentality that will not only uphold the ideals of democracy, promote human rights and the principle of equality, but to appreciate the gift of diversity and participate actively towards building a society that is safe, peaceful and prosperous.



More so, the following can also be considered as a way forward: review and revise curriculum to prioritise citizenship education; provide teacher training and resources; encourage community engagement and partnerships; leverage technology for civic education; foster inclusive and participatory governance; promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills; address socio-economic inequalities; do away with outdated content and materials; and increase focus on critical thinking and skills and student-centred and inquiry-based learning. If utilised, the contribution in this paper will go a long way in solving the problem of insecurity in our country.

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