A NEW APPROACH TO CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Citizenship and the education that promotes citizenship are as old as human society. There are two perspectives to it: traditional/nationalistic and transformative education, otherwise known as education for active citizenship. While nationalistic approach is conservative and suited to autocratic systems, education for active citizenship is transformative and appropriate for democratic governance. It is the education for the 21st Century. Nigeria applies the nationalistic approach which is anachronistic. This paper argued for the introduction of education for active citizenship if Nigeria is to achieve sustainable democracy and development. The paper clarified the concepts of citizenship education and education for active citizenship. It defined the concepts of citizenship, the citizen and the active citizen. It discussed the objectives, themes and values of education for active citizenship. The paper is based on three theoretical perspectives: the functional theory of education, Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed and the African concept of communalism justified by the pluralist theory of citizenship. This is an exploratory position paper and thus relied on library and desktop research. It concluded with recommendations for curriculum review to reflect education for active citizenship since there has been scarcely any review from the introduction of Citizenship Education in Nigerian Polytechnics.

Keywords: Active citizenship, Education for Active Citizenship, Nigeria, democracy, traditional and transformative.

Introduction

Issues of citizenship and the type of education that promotes it are as old as human society. They have been of utmost concern for peoples of different cultures. And they have been pivotal in the socialization processes of every people all over the world and of different historical epochs. They are necessary for the existence and maintenance of security and stability in society. Consequently, they have been the preoccupation of political philosophers in recorded history. The philosophers "all recognized the need to educate the younger members of society, whether for the purpose of reproducing the social order or for the purpose of radically transforming it" (Costa, 2011). That means that traditional (nationalistic) and transformative (education for active citizenship) approaches to citizenship education have existed at different points in human history, depending on the era and philosophical and ideological orientation. What differed is the interpretation of the ways to achieve the political ideals of freedom and equality - the fundamental principles of democracy.

From the last decades of the 20th century, citizenship and education of the citizen have witnessed a revived interest. Matters relating to citizenship have assumed a distinctive character of urgency (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998). This revival is predicated on challenges of citizen participation in the electoral process and on the total disengagement of citizens from the state.

(McCowan, 2009). The renewed interest includes the role educational institutions play in securing the enjoyment of rights and the realization of obligations by young people. That is why Costa (2011) holds that, 'recent philosophical debates on citizenship and education are distinctive in that they reflect a number of concerns related to the political, cultural, and social conditions of the contemporary world'.

Citizen engagement with the state is an essential factor for the effective exercise of citizenship, collective security, human rights, democracy, good governance principles and sustainable development. These implicate active democratic citizenship. In Nigeria, there is the challenge of citizen withdrawal from and lack of engagement with the state. Corruption among military, political leaders and the judiciary; most citizens seeing crime as a legitimate avenue of advancement; and others turning inwards to ethnic prejudice and religious bigotry for solution, are manifestations of this citizens' disengagement from the state (Maier, 2000). They are also in turn, the causes of the disengagement. 'We have either neglected or are busy undermining the institutions that mediate and regulate social harmony. The perversion and erosion of social norms as well as the political and economic institutions that regulate human behavior, which hitherto promote equality' (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2014), have also led to widened gap between the citizens and the state. It has also widened inequality and poverty. The sense of frustration and powerlessness felt by the citizens has been overwhelmingly and disturbingly real. A serious disconnect between the state and the citizens, which resulted from the mechanical way Nigeria was created by the colonial masters without the intention of achieving national citizenship, is clearly discernible. The experience of military rule worsened it. And then 'the failure of the developmental state has made it seem irredeemable by its failure to plan for and deliver development. Thus going by all socio-economic indices, Nigeria has suffered a befuddling stagnation and regress in spite of its considerable prospects' (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2014).

In this setting, citizenship education was introduced and is being taught in Nigeria. But it has been conservative and aimed at reproducing the social order rather than transformative in provision and implementation. Since its introduction in the tertiary education system in the early 90s, the curriculum has only been revised once. Nevertheless, it remains far removed from the realities of the Nigerian society and basically the same as the initial time it was introduced. It is the contention of this paper that the inappropriateness, the shallowness of the syllabus and poor implementation strategies led to the problems of citizenship withdrawal from the state and its consequent insecurity and instability. This is because they bear no relevance to our national realities and global experiences. To find solutions to these challenges of disengagement led to the advocacy for education for active citizenship which is the contemporary approach to Citizenship Education. To fully appreciate the challenges, this work explores the concept of Citizenship Education and Education for Active Citizenship. It defined citizenship, the citizen and the active citizen. It proceeded to explain and discuss the objectives, themes and values of education for active citizenship. It then explored the new ways of teaching citizenship education advocated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to evaluate the practice in Nigeria. The paper is based on three theoretical perspectives: the functional theory of education, African communalism and collectivism and Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed. The application of three frameworks is predicated on the pluralistic theory of citizenship (Gauba, 2007).

This is a position paper. It relied on library and desktop research. It is exploratory. It concluded with recommendations for curriculum review to reflect education for active citizenship.

Theoretical Frameworks

The pluralist approach adopted in this paper is supported by the pluralist theory of citizenship which 'treats the development of citizenship as a complex and multi-dimensional process' that 'cannot be attributed to a single cause' (Gauba, 2007). So the paper has three conceptual groundings for appropriate theoretical coverage. These are functional theory of education, communalism and Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed. They are taken for their intrinsic connection and emphasis on participation in community existence and relation to education as an empowerment and lifelong process.

Education has been generally defined as a vehicle through which citizens can learn the right attitudes and value systems of their country. That is why Fadeiye (1995) cited by Oyeleke (2011) argues 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'. Consequently, he opines, '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 (Oyeleke, 2011).

The concept of communalism implies a sense of implicit acceptance, care, and concern for man as a being that co-exists with others. It is feeling involved with others (Ekei, 2001). Communalism has as its intrinsic elements the principle of participation, sharing, equality of liberty and corporate responsibility (Ekei, 2001). These are the values Nigeria needs to establish connection with its citizens and for the citizens to practice tolerance required in a multi-national community. The African communalism – as – justice, speaks of common inheritance or common participation in the creation of social goods or the good of the state and its enjoyment in equality and liberty (Ekei, 2001). Education for active citizenship is the only approach to engender this.

Paulo Freire is famous for his development of political education. According to McCowan (2009), Paulo Freire is a believer in the principle that everyone should be enabled to freely participate politically in society and thus strongly backs political education. Freire (1970), in his famous work, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, advocated 'a theory of *conscientization* defined as a process through which marginalized groups could move from a naïve to a critical consciousness, thereby creating the conditions for the transformation of society in accordance with social justice' (McGowan, 2009). Commenting further on Freire's work, McGowan (2009), avers that by focusing on the democratization of management systems, Paulo Freire, has inspired a number of contemporary educationists and educational movements, from US critical pedagogy to Actionaid's Reflect programme; his influence over time extending to school as well as adult education. This makes it an appropriate theoretical tool for Education for active citizenship, being a transformative approach and a lifelong process. Pedagogy of the oppressed as a tool for adult and non-formal education contributes to the explanation and the effective development of active citizenship. It is suited to voter education.

The Concepts of Citizenship and the Citizen

According to (Gauba, 2007), citizenship is 'the status of an individual as a full and responsible member of a political community' and the citizen as one 'who owes allegiance to a state and in turn receives protection from the state'. In that light, this work defines citizenship as the status of a people as equal, free, responsible and full members of a political community and the process of the realization or enjoyment of that status. Being responsible and full members of a political community connotes the idea of the participation in the making and sustenance of the state as well as obedience to the laws of the state. That means that citizens are people who participate in the affairs of a state, owe allegiance to the state and in turn receive protection from the state. They must fulfill their duties and obligations toward the state. The state in turn secures their human rights and enables them to realize the best in themselves by establishing conditions and structures under which the rights can be enjoyed and their full development assured, in a peaceful and secured environment (Okoro, 2018).

The Concept of Active Citizenship and the Active Citizen

The Irish White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity defines active citizenship as the active role of people, communities and voluntary organisations in decision-making which directly affects them'. The paper explains that the definition 'extends the concept of formal citizenship and democratic society from one of basic civil, political and social and economic rights to one of direct democratic participation and responsibility'. Thus the concept of citizenship used in this paper is basically that of active citizenship. Active citizenship is highly characterized by participation in democratic governance on the part of the citizens which embodies the concept of active democratic citizenship. As active citizens, we determine 'the sort of society we want for the future - our future in what sort of world. And what sort of economy, education system, community development, and governance we want and need' (Taskforce on Active Citizenship, 2007). The active citizen then is one who engages in 'active exercise of social rights and shared responsibilities associated with belonging to a community or society' (NESF, 2003). Active citizens are as political as they are moral; moral sensibility derives in part from political understanding; political apathy spawns moral apathy (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998).

The Concepts of Citizenship Education

The terms citizenship education and civic education are used interchangeably in extant literature. Citizenship education has followed two perspectives: traditional and transformative. Traditional citizenship education is nationalistic and conservative. It aims at inculcating adherence to the established order and blind obedience to the state, its structures, institutions and agencies. On the other hand, transformative perspective is concerned with radical change through the participation of the citizen in the affairs of the state as a pre-condition for a virile society. The particular approach to citizenship education determines the successful realization of active citizenship or the lack of it. This is why this paper is recommending education for active citizenship which incorporates active democratic citizenship. This will be clarified with the explanation of traditional citizenship education.

Traditional Citizenship Education

McGowan (2009) avers that traditional citizenship education has always been approached from a nationalistic perspective. It has always been concerned with the development of positive feelings toward those rituals, ceremonies, symbols, ideas and persons that express or incorporate these [nationalist] values. It is also concerned with development of competencies related to operating as a national citizen (voting, payment of taxes, and respect for authority). It encourages development of negative feelings toward countries, ideologies, symbols and persons considered contra-national (McCowan, 2009). Thus it emphasizes loyalty and docility and the maintenance of social order. In societies emerging from colonialism and military dictatorship, Nigeria, for example, citizenship education has always been approached from the nation-state or nation-building perspective with emphasis on unquestionable loyalty to its systems and institutions (Oyeleke, 2011). The nationalist citizenship education is often 'justified on the basis of the maintenance of law and order and control in society, and legitimization of current political institutions' (McGowan, 2009). This is summarized 'in the objective of the creation of a harmonious and cohesive society'. (McCowan, 2009). Here lies its limitation as UNESCO declares that education for the 21st Century prohibits dogmatism in any kind of citizenship education. As it avers, 'in a democracy, citizenship education seeks to educate citizens who will be free to make their own judgments and hold their own convictions' (UNESCO, 2010). The organization goes further to state that 'compliance with existing laws should not prevent citizens from seeking and planning better and ever more just laws'. And concludes that 'respect for law, which is one of the objectives of civics education, calls not for blind submission to rules and laws already passed but the ability to participate in drawing them up' (UNESCO, 2010).

Exploring the Concept of Education for Active Citizenship

Education for active citizenship on its part is born of the transformative approach to Citizenship Education. The transformative approach evolved to focus attention on the active role of the citizen in the health of the nation. In the African state system, it is rooted in communalism as the African essence which sees participation in community life as inescapable in social and political existence (cf. Ekei 1999, Okoro 2015). In Western liberal thinking, it is seen to be influenced by individualism and liberalism in the philosophies of John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. In a more contemporary approach, Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed empowers the citizens to take ownership of the development process and thus development. All of these demand active participation of the people which education for active citizenship inculcates.

In the last decades of 20th century, the transformative approach came to be advocated in practical social and political life leading to the description of citizenship education as the education for citizenship. In this sense, citizenship education is seen as a means to an end even if it involves learning a body of knowledge, as well as the development of skills and values. These values are cultivated for practical purposes of participation in community life. It is a means to active democratic citizenship which has become the current concept for citizenship education.

This perspective guides contemporary definitions and approaches to citizenship education in the 21st century; founded on the concept of the active citizen and education for active citizenship. The United Nations agencies, particularly, UNESCO, played a major role in this paradigm shift in conceptual and practical strategies. Thus UNESCO recommended that,

> Member States should promote, at every stage of education, an active civic training which will enable every person to gain knowledge of the method of operation and the work of public institutions … and to

participate in the cultural life of the community and in public affairs (UNESCO, 1974).

Based on the above, the UNESCO declaration of 1995 directed that: '[I]t is necessary to introduce, at all levels, true education for citizenship' (UNESCO, 1995).

The above capture the evolution and development of the concept of Education for Active Citizenship which lays emphasis on the active involvement of the citizens in the affairs of the state. Thus education for active citizenship which is the contemporary concept of citizenship education is based on a lucid conceptual foundation, which relates to the induction of young people into the legal, moral and political arena of public life… (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998) and develops skills of reflection, enquiry and debate.

Education for active citizenship as a social process includes but is not limited to education of future generations. It is education that facilitates action in the present and the future. Democratic governance requires citizens who are active, informed and responsible. The products of education for active citizenship are citizens who are aware of their rights and responsibilities; informed about the social and political world; concerned about the welfare of others; articulate in their opinions and arguments; capable of having an influence on the world; active in their communities; responsible in how they act as citizens (Okoro, 2018).

These capacities require citizenship education to be developed in the citizens through an inclusive, pervasive and lifelong process and approach. The nature of the state and its socio-political structures, systems and processes determine approaches and priorities in education for citizenship. And Nigeria as a democratic society with the challenges of insecurity and instability, must adopt education for active citizenship as a strategy and approach to citizenship education if it must achieve sustainable development.

Definition of Education for Active Citizenship

As part of school curriculum, UNESCO (2010) defines citizenship education as 'educating children, from early childhood, to become clear-thinking and enlightened citizens who participate in decisions concerning society'. The Ministry of Education Science, Republic of Ghana explains it as a subject that aims at producing competent and participatory citizens who will contribute to the development of the communities and country in the spirit of patriotism and democracy (Ministry of Education Science and Sports, 2007). Citizenship Foundation, describes it as 'enabling people to make their own decisions and to take responsibility for their own lives and communities'. Responsibility in this context means political and moral virtue implying, care for others; premeditation and calculation about what effect actions are likely to have on others; and understanding and care for the consequences (Porter, 2002). Thus Education for Active Citizenship is about the inculcation of socio-political and moral values for harmonious living and social and democratic progress. It encourages elements of communalism. It is a focus on the essential and active role of the citizen in the creation and sustenance of the state. It 'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of students (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998)' and also 'prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life' (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998). It is a spotlight on the citizen: one whose role in the development of the state determines the health of the political community. It deals with disconnect between the citizens and the state and citizens disengagement from the state.

So as a general notion, Education for Active Citizenship is the making of an individual into an effective member of a political community. It involves the creation of civic consciousness and the imparting of the knowledge and sense of action to achieve the civic duties of the citizens. The inculcation of these skills will ensure that the individual lives up to his/her duties in contributing to the welfare of the community and the health of the nation. From a human-rights-based approach, it leads to the citizen's migration from 'I beg' to 'I demand' in service provision, infrastructural development and the protection of human rights by the government. That is education for active citizenship which embraces knowledge of citizenship and civic society, 'behaving and acting as a citizen', and developing values, skills and understanding of socio-political and moral processes in the society. It aims at a change in the political culture of a people: for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life (Porter, 2002).

Thus there is a significant difference between a form of citizenship education that simply encourages decency and good behavior (traditional) and one that is rooted in political awareness and action and a commitment to social justice and equal opportunity (transformative). Education for Active Citizenship focuses on the role of the citizen in not just learning, but acting or doing represented in citizen action in demanding accountable, participatory and transparent governance. Nationalistic or traditional Citizenship Education is concerned merely with the imparting of the knowledge of the structures, institutions and systems of government. That means Education for Active Citizenship is citizens-driven as it demands from the citizen an active engagement with the state or state actors to ensure the state fulfills its contract of security, protection and promotion of the human rights of the citizens. The citizens by their actions ensure the continued existence of the state by strengthening the structures, institutions, systems and processes for effective fulfillment of the demands of the citizens. It trains the citizens to speak truth to power and demand that leaders walk the talk. It also trains the citizens to take responsibility for the form in which their state takes. It is based on the proprietary right of the citizen as the owner of the state.

It is therefore the imparting of the rights and duties of a citizen as well as the understanding of the structures and functions of the state to enable the individual contribute effectively towards the enhancement of the welfare of the state, the individual and fellow citizens. That is why it is described as a means to an end.

The Nature of Education for Active Citizenship as a Course of Study

As a course of study, Education for Active Citizenship is interdisciplinary involving the blending of such areas of study as Politics, Philosophy, History, Law, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Economy and Environmental Sciences. It is inclusive, pervasive and lifelong. It is inclusive because every young person is equally entitled to it; pervasive because it is an integral part of all education for young people. Lifelong because it continuous all through life. Citizenship and citizenship education issues are real, topical; most times sensitive, often controversial and ultimately moral. Understood in this way Education for Active Citizenship is concerned with the individual as a subject of ethics and law, entitled to all the rights inherent in human nature (human rights). It is also concerned with the individual as citizen who is entitled to and participates in civil, political and socio-economic rights recognized by the national constitution of the country concerned (UNESCO, 2010). To further

explain why Nigeria should adopt education for active citizenship, it is important to briefly explain the objectives, essential elements and the themes, as well as the skills it imparts.

Objectives and Essential Elements of Citizenship Education

Citizenship education has three main objectives: to educate people in citizenship and human rights through an understanding of the principles and institutions [which govern a state or nation]; to educate the citizen to learn to exercise judgment and critical faculty; and to educate the citizen to acquire a sense of individual and community responsibilities (UNESCO, 2010). Thus education for active citizenship is an instrument for exploring values, developing skills, knowledge/understanding and attitudes necessary for a democratic practice and life in the state. The skills, knowledge and attitude are regarded as the essential elements of Education for Active Citizenship.

Themes for / Skills from Citizenship Education

From the objectives of Education for Active Citizenship, four major themes can be derived, such as the relations between individuals and society: individual and collective freedoms, and rejection of any kind of discrimination. The relations between citizens and the government; that is, what is involved in democracy and the organization of the state. The last two are the relations between the citizen and democratic life and the responsibility of the individual and the citizen in the international community (UNESCO, 2010). Also citizenship education develops certain skills in a person; such as a willingness to investigate issues in…; a readiness to recognise social, economic, ecological and political dimensions of issues needed to resolve them and the ability to analyse issues and to participate in action aimed at achieving a sustainable future (UNESCO, 2010).

A New Way of Teaching Citizenship Education

Advocating for education for active citizenship:

> We aim at no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally: for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life and with the critical capacities to weigh evidence before speaking and acting; to build on and to extend radically to young people the best in existing traditions of community involvement and public service, and to make them individually confident in finding new forms of involvement and action among themselves (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998).

Consequently, UNESCO insists that the right methods and approaches to citizenship education are interactive and facilitative to unlock the skills in the people because of the discussion among students and between students and lecturers. According to the organization, 'they provide for students to speak and express themselves (UNESCO, 2010)' and as a result encourages reflection on citizenship, democracy, justice, freedom and peace. Field experiences where students have firsthand encounter of government in operation are also essential. The new way also involves the introduction and

continuance of the norms of democratic governance in schools that involves students in the management of the institution as it affects them.

Thus Education for the 21st Century encourages action-reflection; interaction and facilitation methods of teaching and learning as 'citizenship education needs to be taught in ways that bring out the ever-constant link between knowledge and practice' according to (UNESCO, 2010). 'The interaction between concepts and action gradually produces the ability to think in terms of values and to refer to them' (UNESCO, 2010), such as the values of liberty, dignity, solidarity and tolerance. In other words, education for active citizenship is based on 'knowledge, practice and values that constantly interact' (UNESCO, 2010).

Conclusion: Change in the Approach to Citizenship Education in Nigeria

In Nigeria, Citizenship Education was birthed in authoritarianism and autocracy as a formal course of study. It was known and taught as Civics in primary schools in the 70s after the civil war as a response to the causes and experiences of the war. It later became an aspect of social studies in primary and secondary schools but now civic education. In 1992, during the administration of General Babangida, Citizenship Education was introduced at the tertiary level. But the approach remained nationalistic rather than transformative.

The intent of the curriculum is to expose 'all our students to practical issues of government, good citizenship, environment, health and national development in order to enhance the citizen's political, social, and moral performance in the challenging real life situations in Nigeria' (National Board for Technical Education(NBTE) Curriculum on Citizenship Education). The content of the curriculum also includes operational definitions of citizenship, mode of acquisition, fundamental rights and duties of citizens, and national symbols.

Even though the curriculum addresses some fundamental issues regarding the learning of citizenship, the content has been observed to lack depth and the implementation, inappropriate and dysfunctional. They cannot in reality achieve and have failed to achieve the objectives, skills and themes of education for active citizenship. Thus disconnect between the state and the citizens that have given rise to insecurity and instability. The situation is made worse by the teaching methods that remain traditional, teacher - centered with no practical application in the school ethos and practices (Oyeleke, 2011). There are no provisions for practical experiences such as visits to the national assembly and courts in session and other institutions relevant to the practice of citizenship. Interactions with the police and other security agencies would have afforded opportunities for practical human rights practice. So in implementation, students are not practically involved. Textbooks have been discovered to be shallow and inappropriate (Oyeleke, 2011). 'The mode of evaluation is pen and paper system in which, in most cases students respond to questions after memorizing concepts' (Oyeleke, 2011). This has been worsened by the introduction of Computer – Based – Examination (CBE) where 70% of the examination is multiple choice questions. According to (Oyeleke, 2011), citing (Marinho, 2009), 'this negatively impacts the classroom teachings 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'.

Recommendations

Basically this paper recommends the introduction of education for active citizenship as it has been proven to be appropriate for the 21st Century, if Nigeria is to achieve sustainable democracy and development. This is because the concept and practice embrace active democratic citizenship and virtues of tolerance in a multi-national society. We cannot be in democracy and be preparing ourselves for authoritarianism. Of course it has not been working.

As noted, the curriculum which has only been reviewed once for the past twenty six years is obviously out of touch with development. With the level of violent conflict and corruption in this country, the curriculum has no provision on corruption and conflict/peace building. Provision for national ethics and discipline does not suffice. The review that was done did not even involve lecturers in citizenship education but by the serviced departments who are not experts in the related areas. There is an urgent need for review and one that must involve the experts. The review must introduce contemporary issues such as anti-corruption and peace building among others.

The teaching methods have to embrace action-reflection, interaction and facilitation strategies as recommended by UNESCO. Practical experiences have to be introduced where students link their classroom experiences with real life operations of government. As a result, field trip should be made an essential part of the curriculum. There is need to improve on existing textbooks and teaching methodology to include useful pedagogical methods that assist in achieving goals. Methods of examination should be reviewed and multiple questions CBE discontinued. Through capacity building workshops, lecturers can be retrained in these pedagogical methods and the production of appropriate literature.

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