Citizenship Education in Nigeria as an Alternative to National Unity

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Informasi Artikel	Abstract
	Nigeria, as a multicultural society, is confronted with issues of ethnicity, insecurity, corruption, political crises, ethnoreligious dichotomies, weak institutions, and poor governance, which result in a lack of trust among its citizens. As a result, many Nigerians advocate secession, while others advocate restructuring. This research aims to explain the place of citizenship education in Nigeria's national unity process. They are using qualitative methods with an interpretive paradigm approach. Civic education produces active citizens who are socially responsible, sensitive, adaptable, and socially intelligent members of their immediate environment and broader society. Genuine national unity will be ushered in by a sincere and willful commitment among Nigeria's diverse citizens to live honestly and consistently, demonstrated in a progressive nation working towards long-term development for present and future generations. This research suggests a way forward to include, among other things, that all Nigerian citizens should seek to imbibe the spirit of accommodating and working with others to promote national unity and integration. Nigeria, sebagai masyarakat multikultural, dihadapkan pada masalah kesukuan, ketidakamanan, korupsi, krisis politik, dikotomi etnoreligius, institusi yang lemah, dan pemerintahan yang buruk, yang mengakibatkan kurangnya kepercayaan di antara warganya.

Akibatnya, banyak orang Nigeria menganjurkan pemisahan diri, sementara yang lain menganjurkan restrukturisasi. Tujuan penelitian ini untuk menjelaskan tempat pendidikan kewarganegaraan dalam proses persatuan nasional Nigeria. Menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan paradigma interpretatif. Pendidikan kewarganegaraan menghasilkan warga negara aktif yang bertanggung jawab secara sosial, sensitif, mudah beradaptasi, dan anggota yang cerdas secara sosial dari lingkungan terdekat mereka dan masyarakat yang lebih luas. Persatuan nasional yang sejati akan diantar oleh komitmen yang tulus dan disengaja di antara warga negara Nigeria yang beragam untuk hidup jujur dan hidup berdampingan, yang ditunjukkan dalam negara progresif yang bekerja menuju pembangunan jangka panjang demi generasi sekarang dan mendatang. Penelitian ini mengemukakan jalan ke depan untuk memasukkan, antara lain, bahwa semua warga negara Nigeria harus berusaha menyerap semangat mengakomodasi dan bekerja dengan orang lain untuk mempromosikan persatuan dan integrasi nasional.

I. INTRODUCTION

The management of Nigeria's political, economic, and social components of the system does not always produce the much-needed result of improving welfare and creating the much-desired unity in the country (Omotuyi, 2016). A country must exist in order to realise the ultimate goal of nationhood; if not, it will serve the unintended and inevitable purpose of being a mere contrivance convenient for the privileged class to exploit the system for personal gain without thinking of how to unify it and a breeding ground where hatred for the country is nurtured among the underprivileged class due to unmet dreams and expectations from the system (Kateb, 2006). This seems to be the actual situation in Nigeria, where many citizens have lost confidence in the nation and its leaders.

Nigeria is yet to find its bearing as a country capable of fulfilling the purposes of its existence for its citizens (Andrews et al., 2017). It, therefore, requires a deliberate reorientation of her citizen's roles, responsibilities, privileges, and rights,

which is the nucleus of citizenship education (Akpan & Udofia, 2015). An individual, ethnic group, or religious sect alone cannot unite a nation; instead, it requires a collective effort (Smith, 1989). This can only be achieved through sensitization of the citizenry about their roles, rights, and privileges and through tolerance, appreciation, a positive attitude, and love for their country. In short, no one loves and can bring unity to Nigeria better than Nigerians. Here lies the need for citizenship education, which equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and understanding to play an active role in society as informed, critical citizens who are morally and socially responsible.

According to Richardson & Abbott (2009), understanding and teaching the ideas of citizenship education and its awareness is essential to the survival and growth of a sovereign nation like Nigeria. This can be attributed to the fact that a capable and reliable citizenry is the foundation of a strong and united polity as well as the development of any country. Thus, citizenship education will be a panacea for promoting and sustaining a united nation (Pashby & Sund, 2020). Simply expressed, a harmonious, united, and integrated society does not discriminate against minorities in decision-making, political appointment, employment, education, or the location of developmental projects but instead tries to form a cohesive force that leads to the success of the nation (Agere, 1986). Therefore, this paper's central theme is citizenship education's role in instilling and equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and understanding they need to participate actively and productively in bringing about national unity in Nigeria.

II. METHODS

This study uses an interpretive paradigm through a qualitative approach, a case study type. The data comes from phenomena that often occur in the surrounding environment. Data collection techniques use observation and documentation. The analytical tools used are the qualitative analysis model Miles and Huberman data reduction, data display and verification. Checking data validity using triangulation; credibility, transferbility, depandibility and confirmability. The

focus of this research is to show clarity, concepts and definitions of citizenship education and national unity.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Citizenship Education

Nigeria, a diverse nation with many ethnic groups, languages, backgrounds, and religious beliefs, requires active, dynamic, united, critical, and knowledgeable individuals. Therefore, citizenship education is a crucial issue rich in underlying societal ideals and required to live in an ever-changing and democratic society. Then, who is a citizen? A citizen is a member of a society or country, such as Nigeria, and entitled to all of Nigeria's advantages and rights as specified in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. According to Bloemraad (2000), a citizen is a person who lives inside a country`s geographical borders, swears allegiance to the government, and has full access to all the government's benefits.

Equally, citizenship education is when the teacher moulds and equips people with the knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills needed to be active, informed, and responsible members of a democratic society (McCowan, 2011; Udofia, 2021). As a result, citizenship education as an educational process is concerned with the practical application of knowledge and skills that support an individual's full participation in his community in order to live a democratic life (Choi, 2016). Citizenship education aims to cultivate active citizens who are socially responsible, socially sensitive, socially adaptive, and socially knowledgeable members of their communities and societies. Citizenship education is a tool that may be utilised to teach Nigerians the values of responsible citizens and how to act in a way that supports national unity and progress.

Citizenship education promotes good citizenship and the spirit of national integration (Tan et al., 2018). It focuses on students' social, cultural, and political development, as well as helping them see themselves as members of society, developing their understanding of democracy, diversity, social justice, fairness, rights, and responsibility, and learning to positively contribute to the society, democratic, and public lives (Wang, 2018). Theoretically, citizenship education

assists in developing citizens who are socially, culturally, and politically active in carrying out their tasks and obligations for the benefit of all members of society, free of prejudice and rancour (Chukwujekwu & Igwe, 2020).

National Unity

Any nation or society that strives for sustenance, growth, and development needs unity. National unity is a situation with complete agreement, peace, harmony, and understanding in national affairs (Jinping, 2017). It is the act of cooperating and working together to achieve common goals and objectives for the benefit of everyone in the country. In Nigeria, national unity can be achieved when there is general tolerance and acceptance of people from other ethnic groups by everyone (Marenin, 1989). It requires the same identity, accepting other Nigerians, and working in unity towards Nigeria's sustainable growth and development.

However, the composition of Nigeria presently is complicated by its diverse culture, origins, history, and religions, and this has made national unity a mirage. In fact, if we can take our minds back to the civil war of 1968, the Niger Delta struggle, and recent agitations for restructuring, Boko Haram, and Biafran republics, our unity as a nation has consistently been under serious threat (Obiorah & Okoye, 2020). The issues of dishonesty on the part of our political class, corruption, and lopsided control of national resources by a few privileged individuals are some of the reasons for these agitations and the quest for division. The continued existence of Nigeria as a sovereign nation is no more beneficial to the ordinary citizens of the country than it is to a few elites and a section of the country. All these factors fueled public dissatisfaction and excitement about the division of the country.

Be that as it may, hope is not lost. Nigeria can still be reoriented and mobilised through civic education. This is very important because our strength as a nation depends on national unity through civic education. This is important because our nation's strength depends on national unity. For example, the United States, one of the greatest nations on earth, is multiracial and multifaith. Still, its greatness is rooted in the diversity Americans have used to build and promote

unity (Boutros-Ghali, 1991). While Okolo (2014) advocated the actual practice of federal character, the zoning of leadership positions, and the autonomy of natural resources by states as panaceas for promoting national unity and integration, this author posits that the use of citizenship education can also be a worthwhile attempt at promoting national unity (Udofia & Alexander, 2017; Udofia & Uduigwomen, 2022).

Nigeria's Quest for Unity

Nigeria, with over 500 ethnic groups and diverse languages and customs that create a rich ethnic diversity, has been searching for unity (Paul & Ademola, 2021). This has led leaders at different levels to enact laws and developmental policies aimed at uniting the citizens. Some of these policies include the Federalism Concept, the creation of more states, the Land Use Decree Act, nation-building policies (with a federal character), the establishment of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, the Revenue Sharing Formula, the NYSC Scheme, the establishment of Unity Schools, the Uniform Local Government System, the Constitutional Conference, the Rotational Presidency, the Zonal Restructuring of the Nation (Umoh, et al., 2017).

However, all these efforts did not yield the much-desired result of uniting the Nigerians but rather further separated them. Indeed, ethnocentrism, tribalism, religious intolerance, and nepotism have dominated political life in Nigeria. This alienated people from the government and left them to their own devices. All of this has led to the formation of separatist groups such as IPOB (Indigenous Biafrans), Odua People's Congress, Niger Delta Liberation Movement, Arewa Consultative Forum, Boko Haram, and others (Nduba, et al., 2020). Nigeria's three major ethnic groups (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba) have maintained their historical dominance in Nigerian politics, and competition between these three groups has fueled corruption, mistrust, and marginalization (Odeyemi¸ 2014). This prevented the policies and ideas that would unite Nigeria from working.

Indeed, building a nation depends on its citizens. Thus, Thomas Jefferson, a former American president, while acknowledging the importance of the people, said, "I know of no safe repository of the ultimate power of society but the people

themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take from them but to inform that discretion by education (Abasy & Mallya, 2022; Ossai & Nwabuwe, 2023). Thus, education is a critical instrument for transforming people into better citizens who will contribute to the development of the country.

The Role of Citizenship Education in Promoting National Unity

Citizenship education increases political participation, and young people who have received citizenship education in and out of school have a more positive attitude about voting and other political activities (Alexandre & Tipanoa, 2022; Magesso, 2022). Citizenship education equips students with the information, skills, and understanding needed to participate effectively in society at the local, national, and worldwide levels. It fosters spiritual, moral, social, and cultural growth, resulting in students who are more self-assured and responsible both in and out of the classroom (Starkey, 2003). It encourages students to take an active part in the lives of their schools, communities, and the larger world. Citizenship education instills in persons the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to care for the well-being and dignity of others and to approach civil choices rationally. Citizenship education also plays the following functions in empowering individuals for national unity:

First common good: citizenship education inculcates the obligation to contribute to the common good of society as one of its fundamental principles (Tilak¸ 2008). The concept of the common good implies that a political community has a set of values. These values and interests are important to all members of society.

Second true: Citizens should be aware of what is happening in their country. They have the right to demand an account from administration officials of the money they have spent, the decisions they have made, and the integrity of their duties (Zhong, et al., 2020).

Third sociological knowledge: The focus is on understanding social structures, norms, values, and issues of social development. It also helps us

understand our place in society, the family, the complexities of social relationships, and differences in age, education, and gender (Bennett & Maton, 2010).

Fourth equality consists of political and social equality. Equality of opportunity to achieve individual and collective goals This equality does not speak of the absence of rank and privilege in society but of the rights of citizens.

Fifth political Knowledge: This helps you understand how modern democracies function. The right to know gives an idea of the fundamentals of the constitutional system as well as the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution.

Sixth freedom: This is the strongest desire. Freedom gives a person the opportunity to independently choose his life goals and the methods of achieving them.

To promote harmony, peace, development, good governance, and economic development, there must be true citizenship education that informs citizens about the values we hold dear as a nation, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and brings people from different ethnic groups together to promote national unity (Gilley, 2009). Through citizenship education, citizens will become acquainted with where their rights end and another person`s rights begin. Individuals and groups will have to scrutinise their conduct for peaceful social interaction and coexistence, thereby fostering peace and national unity. Pashby (2011) further adduced that when other measures fail to produce a united and peaceful society, then there is an urgent need to train and develop the citizens mindsets towards achieving national unity through citizenship education. Thus, citizenship education in our school system is expected to inculcate national moral values and develop a truly patriotic citizen whose consciousness will transcend its ethnic boundaries and, as a consequence, produce an educated citizen who knows his duties to his country at this trying period of our national history.

Obstacles to National Unity

The absence of the rule of law is one of the major bottlenecks to national unity. This is evidenced by the government`s non-challant attitude towards Nigeria`s constitution, a rapid increase in extrajudicial killings, character

assassination by the powerful class, daily violations of citizens` fundamental human rights, and many other practises that undermine the proper devotion to the rule of law. The widespread violation of the constitution and the instruments of the rule of law portends a huge threat to Nigeria`s existence in the 21st century (Onyegbula, 2017). All these culminated in the following situations in Nigeria:

First insecurity: There is insecurity in all parts of the country: the Boko Haram insurgency in the north-east; the Indigenous People of Biafra in the south-east; rising rates of armed robbery, kidnappings, and banditry; farmer-herder clashes; high rates of religious intolerance; and the hate speech dichotomy. All these pose serious threats to the country`s unity. Similarly, Sebaganwa & Semuhoza, (2021) posited that insecurity is a barrier to the formation of a strong national unity, which can facilitate the achievement of significant developmental goals.

Second nepotism: This centres on favouring one`s relatives, ethnic group, or religious group above others. This is more pronounced in the Nigerian government's political appointments, armed forces recruitment, resource allocation, and project siting. The current status quo is anti-national unity because it fosters national division, divisiveness, and fear, all of which impede national unity (Howe, 2021).

Third corruption: Corruption has become inextricably entrenched in the fabric of Nigerian citizens` lives, posing a serious threat to the development of a strong and united society (Aloko & Abdullahi, 2018). The police, road safety, civil defence, and armed forces extort money from citizens with ease; students pay more for grades; citizens pay more to secure employment; contractors pay more to secure contracts; and politicians embezzle public funds placed under their care with impunity. Due to their insincerity and exploits in various parts of the country, Nigerians are among the world`s most corrupt and dishonest people (Wills¸ 2008).

Fourth poverty: As the cost of living rises and the means of sustenance decline on a daily basis due to the government's unfavourable economic policies

and failure to chart a course for rapid economic growth and development, poverty has become a social phenomenon afflicting the generality of the citizenry (Otache₋2020). In fact, poverty is at the root of all problems; it destabilises people and institutions, and only when poverty is reduced or eliminated can we provide comfort and hope.

Fifth religious Intolerance: Religious fanatics who believe that their religion is superior to the beliefs of others create intolerance, fear, a sense of superiority, inadequacy, and a feeling of not belonging to many ethnic groups.

In short, most Nigerians ethnically identify themselves as Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, Tiv, Yoruba, Esan, or Efik. This contributes to the struggle between the tribes in the country. Nigeria will never be united if its citizens doubt each other. People should accept their differences as part of the richness of diversity and not hate each other for them.

The Way Forward

Achieving national unity in a multicultural society requires deliberate action to ensure that citizens' interests are taken into account in national development. Some of them include:

1. A strong system must be built on laws and principles, not on people. The national government must have the rule of law.

2. Democracy must operate on the basis of human inclusion, which protects human rights and allows the people to choose their leaders. In all elections, the will of the people must take precedence.

3. Our education system must be strengthened and aligned to reflect our core values that promote inclusion, respect individual rights and privileges, and are not disparate values that breed hatred, dissatisfaction, and mistrust.

4. The process of hiring leaders should be improved to make room for those proposed as leaders, eliminating those who are selfish, greedy, and ethno-religious.

5. Policies should be formulated and implemented holistically, promoting inclusiveness and not exclusivity through their implementation.

6. All Nigerian citizens should endeavour to imbibe the culture of accommodating and working with others in a manner that promotes national unity and integration.

7. Citizenship education should be taught by instructors who have the required qualifications and experience in the teaching and learning of the subject matter in order to have a positive impact on the students.

IV. CONCLUSION

National unity requires inculcating a uniform consciousness among the various constituents with their cultural, historical, linguistic, and territorial diversities, aimed at evolving a common identity where an individual, as a member of the sovereign entity, has imbibed a sense of belonging and commitment to the realisation and sustenance of the ideals of the system. Every country exists to achieve the significant goal of nationhood, and Nigeria should not be an exception. Unity may appear unrealistic and unachievable, but Nigeria has yet to drift to the extent where it cannot be rescued from the jaws of disintegration. This can be accomplished by applying citizenship education, rich in critical social ideals and concepts. All Nigerian citizens, both youths and adults, should passionately imbibe and inculcate a truth-based lifestyle, be honest in their dealings with one another, and tolerate one another to foster a conducive environment and cooperation among individuals, ethnic groups, and institutions, culminating in practical unity in the country. Through the sincere and voluntary commitment of Nigeria's diverse citizens, true unity can be achieved in the country through citizenship education. However, this requires a conscious effort by leaders and followers at all levels to change their minds, trust each other, and act within the "all for one, one for all" principle.

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