

CIVIC EDUCATION AS CATALYST FOR THE SUSTENANCE OF TRUE FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The federal structure of Nigeria today is a gross anomaly. Federalism as practiced in Nigeria is a far cry from what true federalism represents. In a true federal system of government both the Federal, State and Local Governments are allowed a fair and just exercise of power. In 1954, Nigeria adopted a federal system of government based on the fact that Nigeria is essentially a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society, and as such political and economic power could be distributed evenly among the various groups and levels of government so as to function peacefully. Throughout 56 years of independence, Nigeria and Nigerian have known no peace as the issue of co-operate existence and true federalism is on the decline. There is an outcry among Nigeria citizens in the news on daily basis calling for secession among the federating units as a result of struggle for economic and political power, ethnicity, corruption, tribalism, favoritism, inter-group conflict, revenue allocation, resource control and the crisis of national insecurity as a result of ill functional federalism. Therefore, it becomes imperative to use Civic Education as a catalyst to restore confidence, peace and unity in the minds of young generation Nigerians for the purpose of mutual understanding, dignity of labour, togetherness, truth and love among the federating units for collective co-existence. The pluralistic nature of Nigeria requires the ability of work together with the different groups in order to have a functional economy and social institutions. The Nigerian citizen needs the place of the government to establish a society we all desire as a federation. We therefore suggest among others the need to formulate the constitution of Nigeria on a truly federal basis where both the federal government and the federating units would be allowed a fair and just exercise of economic and political authority.

Keywords: *Civic Education, Sustainable, True Federalism*

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Background to the Study

Nigeria as a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country has been struggling from one government to another in order to survive as a uniform entity. Nigeria and Nigerians, here since amalgamation in 1914 and independence in 1960 still blame her inability to live together on the colonial master's mistake as much of her challenges now is traceable to the colonist poor foresight and projection into the future. In the struggle to live happily among diverse ethnic societies, federalism was adopted as a form of governance with the intents of bringing the country into an indivisible whole. Yet, corruption, religion vigosity, ethnicity, resource control tribalism, favoritism, militancy, secession, political inequality and which region controls, the political and economic power still prevail. The country is now at crossroad as how to exist as a federation with the federating units. Civic education becomes a tool for exploring Nigerian values, attitudes and norms. With Nigeria at a cross road because of her inherent problems affecting nation building, Civic Education becomes a desired tool to build character, develop skills and knowledge that may empowered citizens to carry out their day to day action like patriotism, interaction, communication, initiating issues and team work. To sustain true federalism, Civic Education becomes a pivot point to promote inter-ethnic understanding among the ethnic divide in Nigeria so as to create in the people the strength and beauty of diversities that can lead to co-operate existence.

Atang and Esuabanga (2015) posit that the Nigeria federal structure and operations since the incursion of the military into Nigerian politics has been that of a tendency towards centralization. Mark (2014) regrets that the power differential between the federal government and States is so pronounced and widened that the states are literally left at the mercy of the federal (central) government. By its implications, it therefore means that the federal government has exclusive control as found in section 4(5) of the 1999 constitution of the 68 items on the executive legislative list over the 30 items on the concurrent legislative list. By section 4(5) of 1999 constitution, Izato (2016) interprets that a state law is inconsistent with the federal law in such that concurrent list can always be countermanded by federal superiority.

In view of the above, the 1999 constitution of Nigeria has been described as the equivalent of a "constitutional dictatorship" or as a "unitary constitution crated in federal garb" (Kukah, 2016). This is because, the Nigeria constitution as amended conferred absolute executive powers on the president, a development which makes the Nigerian president the most powerful president in the world. For instance, the federal government receives the largest share of the distributive revenue from the federation account making the federating unit more financially dependent on the central government as the power of revenue allocation is conferred on the central government. This arrangement as observed by Esko Toyo (2013) gives the federal government such tremendous interventionist powers that the country is in reality a defacto unitary state.

Commenting on the present stage of Nigeria federalism Kukah (2016), Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese queries why, the central government of Nigeria monopolizes power and only delegates duties to the component units and consequently changing those duties at

will without any constitutional reference, thereby negating the principles and practice of true federalism where powers are constitutional share among the federating units. Also, Ayade (2016) argues that the federal government has not proven to be a successful device for integrating plural societies as by assessment and performance of federalism in Nigeria as present has clearly recorded a dismal level of failure because the ingredients and standards tenants of federalism are not followed. However, Atiku (2016) reasons that Nigeria political history since independence has been faulty as the foundation to establish a federation demonstrated a severe burden of sustaining federalism in a plural and undeveloped society, where factors making for integration are weak and the values and structures of western liberalism are not properly structured.

Abang (2016), a political analyst believes that Nigeria has not really practiced true federalism in her 56th year of military and democratic rules as the major elements and demands of a federation are missing. Abang (2016) concluded that these missing elements are the causes of Nigeria predicaments experienced in the present administration. The author posed the following questions:

1. Why are supreme and high court judges arrested without a warrant of arrest?
2. Why the one-sided appointment into public office?
3. Why revenue allocation is not equitable shared among the federating units?
4. Why infrastructural development is not evenly distributed?
5. Why the fight against corruption is politicized?
6. Why are religious riot and crisis on the increased?

In attempting to answer the questions above, Lai (2016) asserts that the several conflicts plaguing the Nigerian state today is as a result of the consequence of the failure of government to practice true federalism and quickly blamed the situation on founding fathers and past administration of their inability to tackle these problems. Buhari (2016), president of Nigeria in his independence broadcast to Nigerians called for attitudinal change as the President reasoned that things are difficult and trying times for us as a nation and a people as our problems has deepened the feelings of alienation and the rise of centrifugal forces that are threatening our existence as a federation. This attitudinal change calls for every Nigerian (citizen) to be exposed to democratic knowledge, the values and standards that make for a civil society, needs to understand the processes within the society, their rights and responsibilities as Nigerians and also the place of the government in establishing the society that we desire. These and among others can foster peace in the mind of Nigerians to ensure a sustainable federalism.

From the foregoing therefore, the main purposes of this paper is to discuss on how civic education can be used as a catalyst to sustain a just and true federalism in Nigeria.

Civic Education and Federalism

Civic Education seeks to transmit skills necessary for participation in a civic society as it prepares the young people to fill in their roles and responsibilities as members of a community. Meneke and Nwebo (2013) define Civic Education as a subject that teaches us the right and duties of a citizen and the way the government of our country works. In

another way, Civic Education is the totality of training or education given to a person, to enable him/her becomes a good citizen of a country. It includes all the skills and knowledge that will help an individual to accept the responsibility of citizenship. Adie (2015) posits that Civic Education prepares people for citizenship roles, democratic behaviours and attitudinal change necessary for peaceful co-existence in the society.

For people or individuals to be good citizens, they must be knowledgeable, politically conscious, socially responsible, discipline and committed to the state. Osinbanjo (2016) opines that a citizen who is knowledgeable can make decision and take responsibilities for his/her community as Civic Education has political, social, economic and cultural undertone, which when combine together produce an all round personality. Crittenden and Levine (2013) defines Civic Education as all the processes that affect a people's beliefs, commitment, capabilities and action as members of community.

Brahm (2014) identifies the following as the major functions of Civic Education in a pluralistic society like Nigeria:

- a. Instill in the learners civic characters such as the support for human rights, equal rights, the importance of active political participation, and working to promote the common good.
- b. Developing civic knowledge, through the understanding of the principles and practice of democracy on aspects of representative democracy, the rule of law, human right, citizenship and civil society.
- c. Building civic skills in the learners such as working together with others, collaborative deliberation and decision making, and how to peacefully influence deliberation.
- d. Developing cognitive civic skills to enable students fuse information of political and civic life with public issues.
- e. Foster national discipline, national ethics and values all of which promote national interest, peaceful co-existence, unity and national development.
- f. Inculcates an awareness of the rights and duties of a citizen.
- g. Teaches citizens current and emerging issues, which equips them to avoid actions capable of endangering their lives.

In line with the general objectives or functions of Civic Education as outlined above, Adie (2015) proposed the following as achievable values in Civic Education.

- i. Tolerance and contentment
- ii. Patriotic spirit and loyalty.
- iii. Equity and fairness
- iv. Probity and honesty
- v. Love and togetherness

Fayemi (2013), supporting Adie (2015) reasoned that, it is as a result of societal core values listed above that National integration is achievable in order to sustain a just federalism by:

- a. Establishment of National Youth Services Corp (NYSC)

- b. Establishment of National Cultural Festival (NCF).
- c. Establishment of Unitary Schools (US).
- d. Establishment of National Sport Festivals (NSF)

The conceptual definition of federalism has been very problematic as there has been no universally accepted definition of the word "federalism". Odock (2014) defines federalism as a form of state organization in which there is deconcentration of powers which are constitutionally demarcated between the federal and federating units. In other words, federalism denotes a system in which the powers of government are divided among one authority that govern the whole nation and several authorities that govern its political subdivisions.

Thus, Atang and Esuabanga (2015) reasons that the rationale for federalism is that it prevents all governmental powers from accumulating at the top level and thereby safeguards against national dictatorship. This is possible and effective only when the states and local units have political vitality, decision making ability and money to carry out their own responsibilities. Unlike in Nigeria, this not practicable as all powers comes from the national level. Also, Offiong (2014) conceptualizes federalism as embracing a mechanism of division of powers, roles and functions between the federal and the federating units in domestic affairs, leaving external matters to the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government. In such a process, if the component units have a greater influence over the affairs of the federation, the system is called peripheral federalism. Similarly, when the reverse happens, the federal government having greater power over the federating units, it is called centralized federation.

A true federalism is a political system in which there are constitutional and practically independent levels of governments which when taken together constitute rational political system (Offiong, 2014). Odock (2014) maintains that true federalism imports the freedom of minorities, self realization, regional autonomy and decentralization of powers between the federal and federating unit. Abang (2016) concludes that in a true federalism, the federating units retain their jurisdictions in core political and economic spheres, including natural resources. The practice of a federal system in Nigeria was recognized in 1954 with the introduction of the Lyttleton constitution. Under this constitution, Nigeria became a federation with one federal government and three regions. Gowon (2010) assures that the 1954 constitution gave the region consolidated autonomy and effective power and made regional power attractive as for the first time legislative powers were shared between the federal and regional legislatures. Gowon (2010) states that because of massive infrastructural development, excellent facilities and even viable macro and micro economic policies experienced in the regions, both the 1960 and 1963 Republican Constitution adhered to the concept of true federalism.

The intervention of military in public affairs eroded whatever elements of autonomy constituent units of Nigeria federation enjoyed in the first republic. Sequel to January, 1966 military coup de etat, major General J. I. U. Ironsi who became the Head of State uninformatly pronounced Nigeria a unitary state. i.e decree No 1 of 1966 abrogated

federalism and replaced it with a unitary system of government stating inter alia as Offiong (2014) posits that the federal military government shall have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Nigeria of any part thereof with respect to any matter whatsoever. As a result of political instability which attended that counter coup, and the threat of civil war, Gowon administration decisively divided Nigeria into twelve (12) states. Ever since then, creation of new states became an agenda of every successive military government to sustain result in power. The last was observed in 1993 when General Abacha further balkanized Nigeria into 36 states. Some of these states are mere geographical expression or sub-division without any viable natural resources that would guarantee their economic and political autonomy. Fayemi (2013) observes that some of the states are so small, so powerless, so voiceless and at the end, we are going to have a very powerful control government to which all states must how to for economic and administrative power as observed in the country today. As out of 36 states, it is regrettable that only 8 states are economically viable to pay salaries up to date while the remaining 28 states are asking for a bail out from the federal government.

When the military had consolidated their grip on power, they began a systematic dismantling of federalism in Nigeria as military doctrines began to define the form and content of federalism. The productive and result oriented regional structure of government was replaced with unitarism, control of crude oil resources and its attendant benefit were hijacked to the centre. The 1999 constitution as practiced in Nigeria today is for practical purpose, a unitary constitution as all its political and economic governance is unitary polity. This constitution hampers the ability of the states, the constituent units of the federation to exercise their jurisdictions especially in the areas of natural resources. This present arrangement whereby the federating units solely depends on the centre (federal) government for their survival does not agree with the principles and practice of true federalism.

Since the return of democratic civil rule in May 29, 1999, the issue of practicing true federalism and the desire for each federating units to control her resources have taken the centre stage in national discourse. Atiku (2016) observes that a system of government whereby all powers are concentrated at the centre while the federating units remain appendages of the centre is regrettable as the only solution now are restructuring and since states demands have taken ethno-regional dimensions and this constitute threats to unity and survival of the nascent democracy. Likewise, Odili (2013) concludes that since the idea of what federalism is all about remains strange to Nigeria and Nigerians to date, there is need for restructuring. For instance, in a position paper submitted to National Constitutional Conference (NCC) in 2014, the people of south-south states that:

“The various federating governments should exercise control over all resources found on the surface, beneath the surface and in the air space of their federation including mineral (Liquid and Solid), bio-resources and other natural resources. (Fadahunsi, 2015, pg. 18”).

By the implications of the above statement, the people of south-south are agitating for absolute authority where the natural endowment within their territories is control by the federating units. To them, this is the only way to end their long years of neglect and deprivation, environmental degradation, pollution of fresh water, absence of social amenities, militancy and unemployment. The crux of the south-south people position is for the restructuring of the Nigerian polity and explicitly for the political and economic empowerment of the states for self-determination, equity and true federalism.

Sustaining True Federalism through Civic Education

In spite of the challenges in Nigeria federalism, all hope is not lost in overcoming them. Countries like the United States of America, Canada, and Switzerland which are today acclaimed as models of cooperative federalism had undergone similar crises and shocks of nation building and the struggle for true federalism. They were able to pull down the brick wall standing on their way of building a stable federal state through multiculturalism, national integration, social justice, equality, democracy and respect for human rights.

Therefore, to sustain true federalism in Nigeria, Civic Education becomes a necessary gadget and catalysts enriched with the information necessary to maintain peace in the Nigerian society. Nigeria, a country of diverse ethnic, cultural and religious differences needs a lot of Civic Education to remain united as a federation. This can be done through the following ways:

Fostering National Discipline

Civic Education fosters national discipline, national ethics and values all of which promotes national interest, peaceful co-existence, unity and national development. This is why a good and patriotic citizen should defend his country in times of crises or war. Kukah (2015) reasons that to support Nigeria achieve true federalism, citizens must abide with the tenets or principles of:

1. Peaceful co-existence.
2. Cultural and religious tolerance.
3. Moral and ethical values of society.
4. Always doing the right thing at the right time by:
 - a. Go to work early.
 - b. Follow the queue as services should be done at first come, first serve basis.
 - c. Avoid Africa time mentality.
 - d. Pay tax always and on time.

Self-reliant

Civic Education equips citizen to be self-reliant, so as to contribute their quota to the development of the society for a citizen must be law-abiding and loyal to constituted authority for federalism to prevail. Offiong (2015) postulates that for federalism in Nigeria to be real and true, Nigeria citizen must follow the tenets of Civic Education of self-reliant which includes:

1. Rights, duties, liberties and freedom of citizens.
2. Mutual understanding and interaction among citizens and those in authority.
3. Discipline and ethical conducts of citizens.
4. Ethical values, moral obligations and patriotism among the citizens.
5. Virtues of integrity, accountability transparency and good governance.
6. Foster economic, social and political stability of the nation.

Responsible Citizen

Civic Education encourages active participation of a citizen in a civic society. It is therefore the role of Civic Education to educate and enlighten the young Nigerians about their participation and contributions to ensure the sustainability peace and unity in the federation which it makes provision for courses that teach Nigerians to have respect for diversity in terms of gender, race, religion, age and political affiliation. Buhari (2016) reasons that becoming a responsible citizen of Nigeria will not only reduce the number of crime rate and agitation for succession in the country, but also ensure a large number of citizens who will be ready to serve and ensure that true federalism exist. Buhari (2016) proposed the following ways that can make Nigerian citizen responsible:

1. Obedience to rules and regulations.
2. Promotion of peace and peaceful co-existence.
3. Constant payment of tax, rates and levies.
4. Assistance to law enforcement agencies.
5. Trust in institutions and satisfaction with government policies.
6. Political knowledge, participation, efficacy, tolerance and support for elections.
7. Respect rights and dignity of other citizen.
8. Make positive contributions to the economic development of the society.

Education and proper Information

The issue of sustainable federalism has become a major concern in Nigeria as every day, news in radio, television and newspaper on destruction of gas pipelines in the south, bombing and kidnapping of Nigerians in the north, Fulani and Hausa herdsmen war in the middle belt and electoral and political violence impedes the individual's rights. At this stage as observed by Mark (2014), the future of Nigeria federalism becomes unpredictable since the present is characterized by the destruction of lives, resources and properties in their numbers. This therefore calls for the need for the inculcation of Civic Education at the grassroots level to teach tolerance and acceptance of people. Ayade (2016) believes that the right skills and attitude in Civic Education will ensure that Nigeria experience peace and change at preserving Nigeria federalism. Also, teachers and other vendors of knowledge have the responsibilities of modeling and transmitting to Nigerians the right information that is necessary to achieve a peaceful and unified nation through the use of essential and relevant curriculum of Civic Education.

Conclusion

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society, with diverse historical, linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds, among its people. True federalism unifies its citizen while allowing the various differences among them to find expression and actualization. In other words, federalism allows people of diverse and different cultural, language and religious backgrounds to work together, under one nation and the same time, observe and uphold their group cherished identifies values and aspirations.

The teaching of Civic Education becomes compulsory because in a much-ethnic society like Nigeria, the content of the subject inculcates in a citizen values and attitudes on how to solve most social, economic and political problems and stimulates patriotic ideals in the citizens. Therefore, federalism can be achieved through the knowledge of civic education as this may go a long way in resolving the national question and minimize the adverse effects on federal issues viz: resource control, state creative, revenue allocation, inter-governmental relations and representation in the federal political institutions which persist-since federalism has been operated essentially as a unitary system dominated by the central government.

The Way Forward to Achieve an Ideal Federalism

Federalism is dynamic like any other system of government. Nigeria should practice true federalism to prevent breakup of the country and embark on complete restructuring of the country whereby states will be allowed to develop at their own space and at the same time conform to the national constitution and legal order. To deny the federating units their independence is to invite them to reconsider their membership in the Federal Republic. The coalition of forces that are opposed to a restoration of true federation will only facilitate the dismemberment of the country.

We therefore propose the following as the way forward for Nigeria to achieve tr ideal ue federalism:

1. A sovereign national conference that will lead to a true and just federalism should be urgently organized.
2. Civic Education should be introduced compulsory into school curriculum in primary, secondary and tertiary schools levels.
3. Core values in Civic Education that uphold national integration should be included into school's curriculum.
4. The “Change Slogan” proposed by Mr. President should be followed accordingly.

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