Capitalizing on the Realities of Citizenship for Overcoming Dilemmas of Nation-Building in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

Citizenship education conjures a vital curriculum instrument for raising citizen, rather than ordinary individuals, who would constitute the basis for effective nation-building or for creating nation –states. The assets, qualities and capabilities of the citizen, therefore imply that he possesses immense creative abilities, potentialities and powers. As it is almost impossible to divorce the assets of the citizen in the sphere of nation-building without capitalizing on his creative powers, abilities and potentialities, there is an implication that the total spectrum of citizenship education is, therefore, submerged in immense integrative and inter-disciplinary commitments. This development suggests that the curriculum imperatives of citizenship education has to cope and embrace the complex methodological demands and dimensions which are required for effective classroom dispensation of its subject matter within the framework of Nigerian s education. The teacher has an uphill task to encounter and overcome if he is to achieve instructional effectiveness. In this design, in particular, he has to master the epistemological and ontological imperatives involved in this development if he has to register a high level of success. This directive must necessarily derive not so much from his subject matter knowledge and background but rather from his rational application of methodologies, principles and styles of pedagogy which can contribute significantly in bringing about innovations which are intrinsic in curriculum inter-disciplining and curriculum integration. This line of thought represents a kind of panacea which could be employed for the purpose of exploring and capitalizing on the assets intrinsic in the creative capabilities and powers of the citizen in the arduous task of nation building within the framework of Nigerian schools.

Keywords: Citizenship, Nation-building and Generic skills.

Background to the Study

Banks (2005) holds that the ideals of citizenship emerged about a century ago as a kind of panacea to solving problems confronting human-kind. It was upheld that an adoption or adaptation to the ideals intrinsic in citizenship could go a long way towards ameliorating or solving the problems arising from man's inhumanity to man. Thus Russel (1977) regretted that our world has become a mad place; he observed that ever since the First World War, the world ceased to be constructive because men will not apply their intelligence in creating international co-operation but persist in retaining the divisions of mankind into hostile groups.. He disclosed the prevalence of a general collective failure in many parts of the world, on the part of men, to use the intelligence they possess for the purpose of self-preservation. He lamented that many

factors which have been allowed to operate vulgarly in many societal frameworks are all dragging or rather tending society towards a situation of social disorder. Russel (1977, pp.21-22) recounted some of these problems thus:

(a)   forces of religion, sex, education, nationalism, class feeling and competition which have been allowed to operate irrationally in many parts of the world to the extent of producing in the young insanity, stupidity, readiness for homicide, economic injustice and ruthlessness;

(b)   forces of intolerance, hatred, pain and misfortune which have engulfed and consumed many minds such that they have lost the power of balanced judgment which is needed for an emergence from the slough in which mankind is staggering; and

(c)   a characterization of many societies by displays of disharmonies in their political and social frameworks;

In effect, citizenship sprang up as an outcome of the deliberations of many worried minds about the foregoing predicaments. Thus Banks (2005) describes citizenship as a curriculum instrument which is largely tailored at bringing about the breaking of barriers amongst our youth through meaningful exposures to education, mediated through the language of the curriculum during teaching-learning situations. Sigh (2008) reiterates that this endorsement is very vital particularly if youths are to be groomed into prospective and effective citizens. He reflects this endorsement thus:

If formal education is man-made, we can dare take the responsibility for directing our social evolution through the curriculum offerings of our schools, which help to guide the development of young people into individuals of integrity, who can face and tolerate the demands of continually changing society, who can cope with emerging problems creatively and emphatically, who can commit themselves to responsible group behavior necessary for socio-civic living in their community.

Literature Reviews
In almost the same pattern, as portrayed in the foregoing reflections, Mezieobi (1996:8) concedes that schools generally assume and accept the responsibility for training and socializing learners both for character building and civics development on the one hand and for an achievement of academic powers on the other hand. He discloses that the curricular imperatives which these developments demand through classroom operations represent uphill tasks for teachers. Mezieobi's (1996:8) recognition in this feat is reflected thus:

Through an application of the behaviors and or dispositions of learners and their productive application of the values, knowledge, attitudes, skills and competencies acquired in schools' situations into real life settings, can the effectiveness of schools in terms of achieving socio-civic goals and objectives be measured?

Osuagwu and Ogbonnaya (1997) visualize citizenship education largely as knowledge, skills and values given to a child or groups of learners with a view to making them functional and responsible individuals capable of contributing to the socio-economic, political and religious

development of the state. Lambert (2003) further portrays citizenship as one of a number of curriculum designs for looking at human life and of organizing our knowledge and experiences about the world in which we live; he endorses that it has largely grown out of our attempts to understand and perhaps, control man's social environment and or the world at large.

Russell (1977) recognizes that a good deal of demands are made from a citizen by members of his society as a result of the positive and humane characteristics, attributes and values which he is deemed to possess. He was prompted to make a distinction between the good citizen and the good individual. He contended that although "the good individual is he who ministers to the goods of the totality of individuals in a given society, his attitudes could degenerate into an exhibition of nonchalance in sensitive issues involving human kind". On the other hand, Russell (1977) maintains that the "attitude of the citizen is such that he is always aware that his will is not the only one in the world and he is concerned in one way or another to bring harmony to the conflicting wills that exist in the community.

Statement of Problem

Okam & Danladi (2011) disclosed that one of the problematic myths confronting Nigeria as a young democracy relates to the issue of achieving a greater measure of national unity and integration amongst the various national groups that constitute her society. As a political entity, Nigeria has brought together divergently and ethically different nations. These nationalities-whether major or minor, in their varying degrees of success or failure, have constituted a kind of centrifugal force within this single polity. This political unhealthiness represents a major divisive force of great magnitude in terms of the corporate existence of Nigeria as a country. Corbin (1983:3) succinctly presents the problem thus:

There are barriers between groups and classes within the Nigerian society as a result of birth, occupation, language, race and religion; there are barriers between the schooled and the unschooled. Consequently, Nigeria is faced with the task of breaking down these barriers and increasing the opportunities for individuals and groups to be enabled to benefit from social opportunities which may be available to them.

Corbin (1983) lamented that many "negative citizenship" factors and myths which have been allowed to operate vulgarly in many societal frameworks in Nigeria are all dragging or rather tending the society towards a situation of social disorder.

He reflected further that these problems of "negative citizenship values and myths" have gravely militated against Nigeria's march towards effective and sustained socioeconomic and political development since her independence which she obtained about fifty years ago. The retrogression and dilemmas into which the country is engulfed seriously demand the need for value re-orientation, if the barriers recounted above are to be removed so that opportunities could be created for individuals and society to attain meaningful and enhanced development.

Klineberg and Zavalloni (1968: 239) found that there prevails a low level of national identity amongst Nigerians generally. In their comparative study of political orientations amongst

students in ten African countries including Nigeria, Klineberg and Zavalloni (1968:239) found ethnic identity, rather than national, to be highest among Nigerian students than amongst others. They reflected their findings thus:

Nigerian students showed the highest frequency of tribal and regional membership as identity attributes; the highest frequency of ease with others of the same tribe; the lowest frequency of nation as an identity attribute; a very large proportion agreeing that traditional authority and tribal structure may be useful to progress; and almost a unanimous perception of inter-group tensions within Nigeria as constituting a serious problem.

The reflections in the foregoing considerations are demonstrations of "negative citizenship". It is very unlikely that this perspective will be conducive for producing effective Nigerian citizens and for forging a cohesive society that will support the notion of meaningful nation-building. There is need, therefore, for value re-orientation in Nigeria in order to generate a conducive basis for sustainable socio-economic and political development. Thus, Banks (2005:214) entertained a concern that the critical times in which we live demand not only a change but a new orientation regarding our overall handling of issues which are centered on citizenship during teaching-learning situations. He opined that the profound changes taking place in the political, social and economic spheres in many parts of the world are already spelling a dire need for coping with the challenges and opportunities posed in the whole idea of value reorientation in the context of citizenship. Thus, Banks (2005:214) succinctly summarized the problem thus:

To perpetuate democratic ideals and a just society, we need citizens who are not only acutely aware of the characteristics of a democracy and committed to its ideals but who are also aware of the inconsistencies associated with human ideals and their actual behaviours. Only then they will be able to help close the gap between the ideal and the real. Clearly, citizens who are uncritical and unreflective will not be able to improve the human condition in any given nation.

Ikem (2007) has also recounted a number of unwholesome behaviours exhibited by Nigerians which negate national growth and development. He discloses that corruption has permeated into our social fabric to the extent that nothing works in the society except if a bribe is offered to one who legitimately ought to do the job for which he/she is paid. This was amplified by Mezieobi (1996), when he stated that corruption, embezzlement, squandering of the national economy, political naiveté, and executive indiscipline are among the behaviours of Nigerians that negate national development.

Isitoah (1996) discloses that ethnic crises and religious intolerance have led to loss of lives and property and equally creates refugee status amongst citizens in this country; he considers that political violence and political thuggery are twin factors that help to enthrone bad leadership. He noted that the peoples' reaction to this endemic problem was a kind of political apathy in which they do not make themselves available for political registration exercise and voting in an election with a view to enthroning good leadership.

The foregoing challenges imply that our commitment to the tasks involved in citizenship for visionary Nigeria demands, among others, an improvement in all aspects of quality of education in this country. These challenges entail that the processes of education in Nigeria will have to operate at a more satisfactory level than what obtains at the moment. The attainment of a reinvigorated education for visionary Nigeria, according Obanya (2004), calls for "ensuring excellence of all, so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy and essential life-skills" Obanya (2004:15) reflects more on this challenge in ensuring the achievement of this excellence in quality in a commitment in the task of re-invigorating education for visionary Nigeria thus:

This is a tall order demand, since we are yet to begin the cultivation of culture of excellence in this country; it is also a developmental challenge. The world is asking for nothing short of excellence, and if Nigeria is to really belong to the global community, excellence is one of the membership cards.

Objectives of the Study

The study is tailored at a determination of a number of issues which bear on the enthronement of effective citizenship in the Nigerian socio-cultural framework thus:

a)   The extent to which ascendance to prime political and government position is still achieved with ethnicity and religion as the surest means – a development which is considered a bane of democratic governance and nation-building in Nigeria (Okam and Chukwu, 2005; Otite, 2000; Alemika, 2007).

b)   The extent to which democratic governance in Nigeria has championed the entrenchment and consolidation of democratic content, norms and practices including national integration within her geopolitical framework (Alemika, 2007).

c)   A determination of the extent to which the disjuncture between the expectations of the people in the various societies and the government has been so narrowed that their engagements in anti-democratic actions, lawlessness and public disorder have almost became issues of the past (Eke, 2005).

d)   A determination of the extent the governments have recognized the need to promote and protect the rule of law, curtail the high occurrence of a prevalence and incidences of violence, crime and public disorder (Eke, 2005; Alemika, 2007).

e)   A determination of the extent to which the government has started to capitalize on the positive operational capacity of the general public in contributing its effective quotas to the maintenance of peace of order (Eke, 2005; Alemika, 2007).

f)   Determination of the extent to which government has recognized the need for promoting a prevalence of institutions which are typical of democratic societies and thereby protecting her policies from the vicious circle which emanates from a relegation of the rule of law to the background, apart from a number of challenges and ugly circumstances which are antithetical to the maintenance and sustenance of democracy (Alemika, 2007).

g)   A determination of the extent to which the government is displaying the awareness that one of the distinguishing features of classic democratic societies is the centrality of the rights, security and welfare of citizens as her responsibility and legitimacy. (Alemika, 2007).

Methodology and Sources of Data

The materials for this study were assembled from the research writings, analysis of scholars and academics who are committed to the enthronement of citizenship designs as curricular assets that could be capitalized upon in the talk of nation building in a given geo-political framework.

A number of these sources include Dewey (1916), Russel (1977), Osier and Strakey (2003), Lambert (2003), Obanya (2004 and 2007), Banks (2005), Gay (2007), Alemika (2007), and Sigh (2008). The primary method of work in this study involved an extensive review of available literature for a detailed analysis of the issues at stake in exploring and employing the assets in citizenship as a curriculum design in overcoming the dilemmas and challenges of nation-building in Nigeria. These researchers portray citizenship as a curriculum design for raising citizens, rather than ordinary individuals, who would constitute the basis for effective nation-building and for creating nation-states. They generally disclose that the assets, qualities and capabilities of the citizen imply that he possesses immense potentialities and powers which could be tapped and capitalized upon for nation-building through the process of education.

These researchers generally endorsed that the teacher has an uphill task to encounter and overcome if he is to achieve instructional effectiveness in this grand design.

Conceptualizing Citizenship As Human Resource Development Perspectives in Overcoming Dilemmas of Nation-Building in Nigeria

The progressive movement of the 20th century, championed by Dewey, with the emphasis on problem-solving and reasoning bears a good deal of semblance on the citizenship movement. Dewey's (1916) notion of "reflective thinking" seemed to embody this movement. Gray (2007) advanced further that citizenship is integral to improving the academic success of all cadres of students and preparing all youths for democratic functions in pluralistic societies. He expatiated further that student, the world over, need to understand how multi-ethnic issues shape the social, political, economic and cultural fabrics of the geopolitical regions of the world as well as how such issues fundamentally influence their personal lives. Obanya (2007) and a number of scholars (Osier and Strakey, 2003; Newton, 2002; Fleckmore, 2002; and Lambert, 2003) conceptualized citizenship in terms of curriculum content structures that would respond to the needs of global education and which should seek to inculcate the traits required of social forces designed to bring positive changes to the lives of the world's peoples. These scholars conceptualized citizenship in terms of educational exigencies which are displayed in a number of perspectives.

Thus, citizenship endorses that if the masses of the peoples across the globe should be uplifted, access to education at all levels (and in all forms) should be broadened (Obanya, 2007). This implies improved and expanded facilities for both in-school and out-of-school learning; most importantly it means the institution of learning everywhere and across the globe. (Okam and Danladi, 2011; Okam and Jamilu, 2012).

Secondly, citizenship necessarily subscribes to empowering the masses as agents of positive change for the emergence of societies where democracy and human rights reign supreme; this

line of thought implies a people-oriented approach to decision and policy making in education (Newton, 2002; Osier and Strakey, 2003).

Thirdly, citizenship is designed to subscribe to capacity enhancement of individuals in the world at various levels- personal, social and institutional. Lambert (2003) endorses that this frame of thought would mean raising the quality of all the structures that engender the process of education- all the agencies of education, management capacities of the ministries of education, educational institutions, education sector personnel and teaching- learning facilities. Obanya (2007) considers that this is a critical area in citizenship development agenda, as broadened access would not yield the desired results if we neglect quality, relevance and efficiency issues.

Fourthly, citizenship would require the raising of the level of awareness and self-esteem among the peoples of the world. Obanya(2007) reflects that this development, for us in Nigeria, would require an educational system that puts acculturation before enculturation. This development, according to Obanya (2007), means that education in Nigeria must return to its basic tenets of "know thy-self first and thoroughly" and use this knowledge as a lead way to learning about others in the world around; it also implies Nigerians appreciating other peoples of the world through the right type of "Nigerian exposure" in the citizenship context. (Okam and Jamilu, 2012).

Fifthly, citizenship education would involve "knowing about the rest of the world", among other things. This task would entail what Obanya (2007) reflects as "revitalizing"; this network would imply borrowing wisely from external influences and capturing the best of thoughts, actions, inventions and knowledge for improved humanistic learning (Newton, 2002; Fleckmore, 2002).

Sixthly, the enthronement of citizenship in this country implies, among others, that we must necessarily take account of the demands of the knowledge society of the present century (21st Century), where the emphasis is no longer on how knowledgeable but how "knowable" (Obanya, 2007), and where the emphasis has shifted from having the "productive citizen" to being" blessed with the "creative citizen".

Theorizing Citizenship Development Strategies in the Task of Nation-Building
These strategies are examined in three perspectives:
(a) The very essence of citizenship;
(b) Citizenship and the challenge of diversified education; and
(c) Citizenship as a basis for knowledge economy.

The very essence of citizenship capitalizes and endorses the view that a greater tendency prevails in the need to evolving uniform ways of conducting human affairs (Bloom, 2004; Suarez-Oroozoo, 2004; Obanya, 2007). This trend in education is tending towards moving humankind to just one single standard and that standard is international. This cadre of education endorses premium on the development of knowledge economy in which knowledge is highly valued, and propelled by learning institutions, learning societies and learning individuals. Citizenship

education lays emphasis on a lot more than success in tests and examinations. It is no longer a case of going for professional studies so that one could easily find a job after graduation. The function of this education is rooted in character and personality building. This thought pattern bears on the quality and comportment of the mind in which an individual is consummated. The goals of citizenship education are expressed in a variety of forms such as (a) preparation for lifetime learning ;(b) preparation for the world of work; (c) preparation for gaining expertise in a set of generic skills intended to help an individual respond to the demands of a globalized world and of a knowledge economy. Citizenship education is designed to reveal itself as a necessity of life to individual because ultimately it emancipates humans (Bloom,,2004; Suarez-Oroozoo, 2004).

Secondly, the triumph of citizenship capitalizes on the increasing evidence which indicates that global education makes learning more relevant and effective for greater numbers of persons (McCarry, 2002; Park, Goodwin and Lee, 2001). It creates avenues for greater congruency between students' and learners' success performances on the one hand and their cultural backgrounds and such educational experiences as tasks, interests, efforts, academic achievements and feelings of personal efficiency or social accountability on the other hand. Gay (2007) reflects that as the challenge of diversified education increases in response to meeting the multidimensional needs of students and learners, the quest for citizenship ideals grows exponents. He submits that citizenship education may be the solution to problems that currently appear unsolvable including: closing the achievement gap genuinely not leaving any students behind academically; revitalizing faith and trust in the promises of democracy, equity and justice; building education systems that reflect the diverse cultural, ethnic, racial and social contributions that forge society, and providing better opportunities for all cadres of students and learners (Osier & Strakey, 2003; Oyebola, 2007; Okam and Danladi, 2011).

On the basis of its function of creating avenues for knowledge economy Obanya (2007) submits that citizenship education is characterized by a variety of goals expressed in a number of forms, all geared to the production of creative citizens in a given democratic framework. Some of these forms bear on the following: preparation for lifetime learning; preparation for the world of work; preparation for making continuous on-the-job learning possible and easier and preparation for a formal tertiary education. Thus, Obanya (2007) endorses that the educated citizen of today require a set of generic skills intended to enable him respond to the demands of a globalised world and of a knowledge economy. He endorses that these generic skills can be inculcated through virtually any subject discipline; the generic skills, according to him, constitute what are considered as "new constructs and new concepts" in global education and they include "analytical power", "team spirit", "problem solving skills", "information technology assets", "communication power" and "versatility". It is considered that candid and meaningful exploration and acquisition of the assets and merits of these generic skills could constitute the basis for creating and enthroning creative citizens through re-invigorated education for visionary Nigeria in the 21st Century.