**CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND PEACE BUILDING IN NIGERIA**

BY

SHUL-NOM, YOHANNA BAKO

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES,

KADUNA STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, GIDAN WAYA.

[Shulnom710@gmail.com](mailto:Shulnom710@gmail.com)

ANTHONY SHEKARI

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES,

KADUNA STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, GIDAN WAYA.

[Anthonyshekari@gmail.com](mailto:Anthonyshekari@gmail.com)

AND

ASHOTSA, EMMANUEL MOSES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES,

KADUNA STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, GIDAN WAYA.

[ashotsaemmanuel@gmail.com](mailto:ashotsaemmanuel@gmail.com)

**Abstract**

*Citizenship education in Nigeria has gone a long way in creating awareness on the obligations of government and duties of citizens to the nation. This study focuses on citizenship education through peace building in Nigeria. The paper defines citizenship and citizenship education, goals of citizenship education, categories of citizenship, duties of the citizen, renunciation and deprivation of citizenship. It further defines peace building, the need for peace education and its components. Furthermore, this paper proposed peace building course contents to be co-opted into citizenship education to widen the horizon of citizenship education through peace building which includes but not restricted to: the need for dialogue, peace building at the level of individual, peace building at the family level, peace building at school level, tolerance, religious harmony, justice, peace building club, inter-communal sports. The paper concludes by giving recommendation on how to ensure effective citizenship education through peace building.*

*Keywords: Citizenship, Citizenship Education, Violence, Peace, Peace Building.*

**Introduction**

The need to reposition citizenship education in Nigeria through peace building cannot be overemphasized. Citizenship education gives in-depth knowledge about Nigeria and what citizens are required to do to make the society great. It also paves way for national cohesion and integration taking into cognizance the citizen’s roles in nation-building and having a sense of patriotism, transmission of cultural values, norms and precepts.

Every society has its peculiar challenges or needs, and Nigeria is not an exception. Such challenges must be addressed through concerted effort to realign or reposition for better results. This is achievable with proper reorientation through a modest citizenship education that will add value to citizens and paving way for peace in the learning environment.

Alake (1997) posits that it becomes obligatory on the part of the citizen to obey the laws of the state in order to ensure that there is harmony and order. If people are law abiding, anarchy or chaos will be reduced to the barest minimum.

This course shall be studied under the following topics:

1. Citizenship and citizenship education
2. Goals of citizenship education
3. Acquisition of citizenship under the 1999 Constitution
4. Renunciation/deprivation of Nigerian citizenship
5. Duties of the Nigerian citizen
6. Peace building education
7. Components of peace building
8. Strategies of ensuring effective citizenship through peace building education.
9. **Citizenship and citizenship education**

A citizen is a person who has full rights to live in a state or country and enjoys his rights and as well carries out his duties and responsibilities to the state.

Shul-Nom (2015) defines citizenship as

*Legal membership of a politically structured society which involves knowing the law, your rights, privileges and responsibilities as a member. Citizenship is a status in the society. It is an ideal state as well. It generally describes a person with legal rights within a nation; citizenship may be the only real bond which unites everybody as equals without showing bias or discrimination.*

Citizenship can also be seen as legal membership of a given state, country or nation whose citizens are entitled to enjoy the benefits of their citizenship status as captured in the constitution of the state or country.

Citizenship education is the training, instructions or awareness given to learners or students with the aim of producing well informed citizens who are aware and conscious of their rights, duties, obligations and are capable of contributing meaningfully to the growth and development of the nation.

Citizenship education is expected to prepare students or citizens with the basic fundamentals of peace building in order to pave way for a safe, conducive and violent-free society, without which quest for academic pursuit could be jeopardized where violence manifests.

1. **Goals of citizenship education**

The goals of citizenship education include but not restricted to the following:

1. To promote peaceful existence with one another irrespective of our religious, economic, ethnic or educational differences or backgrounds.
2. To inculcate in the students a deep sense of national pride and loyalty to the nation.
3. To inculcate in the students the spirit of self-discipline, commitment/ hard work and respect for constituted authority.
4. To widen the prism of students understanding of the Nigerian constitution and respect its provisions.
5. To inculcate in the students a systematic understanding of the peculiarities in the environment, in order to conserve it for the benefit of the society.

According to Fafunwa (1991) “…the survival of the nation as a corporate indivisible entity would depend on the success of the citizenship education for its younger generation.” The importance of citizenship education to the citizenry and the nation cannot be overemphasized.

**3. Acquisition of citizenship under the 1999 Constitution**

Nigerian citizenship is enshrined in chapter III, section 25-32 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Means of Citizenship acquisition in Nigeria can be obtained through the following ways:

1. **Citizenship by birth**

Section 25 of 1999 Constitution stipulates those who are citizens by birth, thus:

1. Every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents belongs or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria. This type of citizenship is acquired through one’s parents and grandparents if given birth to within the country before 1st October, 1960.
2. Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria. This type of citizenship is acquired through one’s parents or grandparents if he/she was born in Nigeria after 1st October, 1960.
3. Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria. This type of citizenship is acquired through blood and one automatically becomes a citizen of Nigeria either of their parents or grandparents being citizens of Nigeria gave birth to them in another country other than Nigeria, for example France, USA, Cuba, Germany, Liberia, Ethiopia and so on.
4. **Citizenship by registration**

Persons entitled to be registered as Nigerian citizens on application are:

1. Any woman who is or has been married to a citizen of Nigeria
2. Any person who would have been a Nigerian citizen, if either of his parents are citizens of Nigeria.

It should be noted that before registration as a citizen, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria must have been satisfied that the person (applicant) is of good character, shown a clear intention of his desire to be domiciled in Nigeria and must have taken an oath of allegiance as required in the seventh schedule of the 1999 constitution.

1. **Citizenship by naturalization**

This type of citizenship may be acquired upon fulfilling the following conditions:

1. The person is of full age (18 years and above) and has resided in Nigeria for at least 15 years and is of good character and capacity i.e. he/she is of good mental health.
2. The person is familiar with Nigerian language and customs and has made or is capable of making useful contribution to the development, progress and well-being of Nigeria.
3. The governor of the state where the person proposes to be resident agrees that the person seeking naturalization is acceptable to the local community in which the person is to live permanently.
4. The person has taken oath of allegiance contained in the constitution. The person shall be granted a certificate of naturalization if he has resided in Nigeria for twelve months continuously before and during the period of twenty years has resided in Nigeria for an aggregate of not less than fifteen years.

**Dual citizenship**

Nigeria permits dual citizenship according to Section 28 (1) of the 1999 constitution states that “a person shall forfeit forthwith his Nigerian citizenship if, not being a citizen of Nigeria by birth, he acquires or retains the citizenship or nationality of a country, other than Nigeria, of which he is not a citizen by birth.” This means that a Nigerian citizen by birth shall not renounce his Nigerian citizenship if he/she acquires the citizenship of another country. Likewise, a foreigner does not need to renounce the citizenship of his country by birth before acquiring the citizenship of Nigeria. But before being granted Nigerian citizenship, he cannot be granted Nigerian citizenship if he/she has obtained the citizenship of another third country other than his country of birth which he/she must renounce within twelve months of acquiring Nigerian citizenship.

Sub-section (2) of chapter 28 of the 1999 constitution further states that:

*Any registration of a person as a citizen of Nigeria or the grant of a certificate of naturalization to a person who is a citizen of a country other than Nigeria at the time of such registration or grant shall, if he is not a citizen by birth of that other country, be conditional upon effective renunciation of the citizenship or nationality of that other country within a period of not more than twelve months from the date of such registration.*

1. **Renunciation/Deprivation of Nigerian Citizenship**
2. **Renunciation of citizenship:** A citizen of Nigeria can renounce his/her citizenship, by making a declaration as prescribed by law and the person in question shall cease to be a citizen of Nigeria. The President has the power and may withhold the registration of any declaration made if the declaration is made during any war in which Nigeria is physically involved or in his opinion, it is otherwise contrary to the public policy of the country.
3. **Deprivation of citizenship**

In Nigeria, the President of the Federal Republic may deprive a person, other than one who is a citizen of Nigeria by birth or by registration of his/her citizenship. If he/she is satisfied that such a person within a period of seven years after becoming naturalized has been sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than three years or the person has shown himself by act of speech to be disloyal, engaged unlawfully in any business in such a manner as to assist the enemy of Nigeria in the course of prosecuting war with the enemy country.

It must be noted that before citizenship is withdrawn, the President take decisions taking into cognisance the records of court of law, tribunals or after due consultation/enquiry in accordance with regulations made by him/her.

1. **Duties of a citizen**

Section 24 of the 1999 constitution states thus:

1. Abide by this constitution, respect its ideals and its institutions, the national flag, national anthem, the national pledge, and legitimate authorities;
2. Help to enhance the power, prestige and good name of Nigeria, defend Nigeria and render national service as may be required;
3. Respect the dignity of other citizens and the rights and legitimate interests of others and live in unity and harmony in the spirit of common brotherhood;
4. Make positive and useful contribution to the advancement, progress and well-being of the community where he resides;
5. Render assistance to the appropriate and lawful agencies in the maintenance of law and order; and
6. Declare his income honestly to appropriate and lawful agencies and pay his tax promptly.

The above constitutional provision is not a straight-jacketed one. A citizen is expected to perform his/her civic responsibilities or duties with all sense of decorum and commitment in order to ensure the progress of one’s community or the nation at large. This will bring speedy development especially when everyone complies with laid down rules.

1. **Peace building education**

For a society to develop, peace is necessary and most importantly, peace building mechanisms to ensure that the citizens are properly in tune with ways of ensuring a stable society with little or no violent conflicts.

*According to the United Nations (UN) document an agenda for peace, peace building consists of wide range of activities associated with capacity building, reconciliation, and societal transformation. Peace building is a long term process that occurs after violent conflict has slowed down or come to a halt. Thus, it is the phase of the peace process that takes place after peacemaking and peace building.* Boutros-Gali (1995)

Peace building can be seen as a conscious process of ensuring lasting peace and stopping the reoccurrence of violence by critically looking at the remote and immediate causes of violence and its effects so as to avoid a repeat of violent confrontations or strife.

*Peace building became a familiar concept within the United Nations, following Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali’s report ‘an agenda for peace’ which defined peace building as an action to solidify peace and avoid a relapse into conflict. The 2000 report on the panel on United Nations Peace Operations (also known as Brahimi Report) defined it as “ activities undertaken on the far side of the conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools on building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war.* Shul-Nom (2018)

In ensuring that the citizens are properly educated, the need for a peaceful environment cannot be overemphasized. There is a need to change the interaction patterns that hitherto led to crisis and bring up a new method or pattern of engagement among people. Doing things the same way repeatedly will not give us a different result. This has to do with diplomacy, agreement or dialogue aimed at bringing lasting solutions to the problems.

The need for confession of wrongdoing and forgiveness is vital in peace building. We must not dwell in the pains of the past but look towards a hopeful and peaceful future by redressing past ill treatment of individuals or groups. Worthy of note is that what happened in the past should be exposed and forgiveness should follow.

Peace building requires attention to both emotional and psychological strata and layers of conflict. The social fabric that has been destroyed by war or violence must be repaired, and trauma must be dealt with on the national, community and individual levels. At the national level, parties can accomplish widespread national healing through truth and reconciliation commissions that seek to uncover the truth and deal with perpetrators. At the community level, parties can pay tribute to the suffering of the past through various rituals or ceremonies, or build memorials to commemorate the pain and the suffering that has been endured. Strong family units that can rebuild community structures and moral environments are also crucial. Michelle (2003)

There is need for peace education in our various schools. Children of school age are often used as child soldiers during civil wars and street terrorism. This chain of misplaced value must be flushed ou by all relevant stakeholders if we must have a sound or a better citizenry.

Peace education has to do with imparting knowledge to people or learners on the need for peaceful coexistence and enlightening them on the dangers of violent conflicts which affects the society negatively.

According to Gamut (2006) “peace education is one means of bringing about rational awakening of humanistic, aesthetic and ethical values, which are precondition for individuals, family, society, national and international life.” The rising tension in Nigeria due to insecurity calls for peace education so as to mitigate the scourge of violence in the society.

1. **Components of peace education**

The following are some essential components of peace education which are geared towards maintaining peace:

1. A public education system must be established that has compulsory attendance for all children and youth, integrated so students from previously conflicting groups interact with one another and have the opportunity to build positive relationship with each other.
2. A sense of maturity and common fate needs to be established that highlights mutual goals, the just distribution of benefits from achieving the goals, and a common identity. In schools, this is primarily done through the use of cooperative learning.
3. Students must be taught the constructive controversy procedure to ensure they know how to make difficult decisions and engage in political discourse.
4. Students must be taught how to engage in integrative negotiations and peer mediation to resolve their conflicts with each other constructively.
5. Civic values must be inculcated that focus on students and the long-term common good of the society. Johnson and Johnson (2006)

Ending violence through dispute resolution helps in making students who are also members of the society to ensure the existence of a conducive environment to inculcate citizenship values that are ideal in Nigeria. Injecting peace building in citizenship education is necessary.

1. **Strategies of ensuring effective citizenship through peace building education**

Listed below are some strategies aimed at ensuring effective citizenship education through peace building which can be co-opted into citizenship education:

1. Peace building at the individual level
2. Peace building at the family level
3. Peace building at school
4. The need for dialogue
5. Mutual understanding and respect for peoples’ opinions
6. Peace building club
7. Tolerance
8. Justice
9. Religious harmony
10. Peace above violence
11. Conflict, types of conflict and causes of conflict
12. Inter communal sports
13. Hate speech and its effects

Citizenship education can be better repositioned through peace building. For us to have a peaceful society, the citizenry must have a good knowledge of peace building strategies. Citizenship education also puts to bare roles or duties of citizens in the country.

Violence is eating deeply into the fabrics of our national life in a negative way. If the society is not peaceful, meaningful development will continue to elude us as a people. If schools are continuously attacked by terrorists or gun runners as it happened in Chibok, Buni Yadi, Dapchi and other places in Nigeria, our quest as a nation to inculcate the right values to younger ones will be a herculean task. Living in peace is the construct of the mind, so is violence.

To ensure effective citizenship education, through peace building, the following are recommended:

1. A curriculum should be developed with rich content as proposed to co-opt peace building into citizenship education curricular.
2. After developing the curriculum, teachers who are to implement the curriculum should be trained properly to avoid poor implementation.
3. Citizenship education should be a compulsory subject/course for all students.
4. To reposition citizenship education for a better citizenry, practical session in form of drama should be articulated to demonstrate the duties of citizens, the roles or responsibilities of government and the need for peace and peace building in our society.
5. The learning environment should be made conducive for teaching and learning exercise.
6. We should embrace peace as citizens and be law abiding to ensure harmony, equity and just society. If older people engage in violent confrontations, the younger ones may take it as a value, hence, copying such acts at the detriment of the society.

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