
**COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD FOR
TEACHING PRACTICAL CITIZENSHIP
EDUCATION FOR THE NEW SOCIAL STUDIES**

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Abstract

Citizenship education is a field of study that many countries of the world are beginning to show interest. Great and developing nations are introducing citizenship education into the curricula of their schools. This is because the world is experiencing political, socio-economic and security challenges. The rate of crime has increased in many countries. Leaders of the world therefore are looking for ways to reduce or even eliminate the crimes. Sadly, criminals have come up with more sophisticated ways of committing crimes. In Nigeria, there is an unprecedented rate and types of crimes going. Criminals freely roam about killing, kidnapping or abducting people and huge ransoms are paid to secure the release of the people abducted. For many years now the government has set up agencies with the hope of dealing with these social vices. This approach has not yielded the desired result. Many countries of the world that have faced similar challenges as Nigeria have resorted to teaching people about good values of life, respect of law, human life and appreciating differences in status through citizenship

education. Social Studies is the recommended field of specialization for teaching the course content in citizenship education. This is because of the close relatedness of the content in citizenship education and those of Social Studies. To achieve change in behavior of citizens, it is recommended that teaching citizenship should commence as early as possible in the life of the child. However, the methodology to use in the teaching is an area of concern to experts. It is recommended that methods that give room for interaction, discussions inclusiveness and team work including field trip or interaction with the environment should be adapted.

Keywords: *Cooperative Learning, Citizenship Education, Social Studies*

Introduction

Nigeria as a nation today is in disarray. This is because criminality has become the order of the day. The country is experiencing series of crimes. There are cases of frauds, cyber-crimes, bribery, corruptions and money laundering. In recent times, the country started experiencing unprecedented killings, kidnapping or abduction. People have been kidnapped in their hundreds. Villages have been raided and entire members of communities carried away in the process of being kidnapped. Students, traditional rulers and military personnel have also been attacked and kidnapped (Ibekwe & Alabi, 2021). According to Yusuf, (2011) Nigeria is known for inter-religious crisis and intra-ethnic violence. Religious fundamentalism has resulted in having groups like Boko Haram and Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP). On his part, Nduka (2004) expressed great worry over deplorable ethnical attitude in the country. He stated that people and especially the youth easily express riotous behaviors over the happenings in the country. This calls for citizenship education in the country.

Mutch (2003) states that citizenship simply refers to status, identity and democratic ideals. Status as explained by Mutch

relates to legal rights and responsibilities that a person has as a member of a country or community within the political entity. Identity as in citizenship refers to national identity. People can also be identified as belonging to religious, political, ethnic, regional, or other affiliations or entities. Democratic citizenship entails becoming informed about issues that affect individuals and participating with others in determining how society will resolve those issues (Portelli & Solomon, 2001). Citizenship education is an important aspect of education that the whole world is clamouring for. It is included in the curriculum and schools are charged to teach citizenship education. However, in the world of today, issues embedded in citizenship education are influenced by quite a number of factors. Democratic ideals, status and legal rights issues as stated by Mutch (2005) are already being experienced through family, media, peers and organisations and communities in general. Since children are unconsciously exposed to issues of citizenship education at their ages in the society, and it is required of school to teach citizenship education to members of its society; it is most appropriate introducing citizenship education from childhood. Alth of and Berkowitz, (2006) opine that citizenship education should begin in childhood, and schools are critical to this process to reflect the spirit of democracy.

Lister et al (2003) are of the opinion that the period of childhood and adolescence are the formative stages for giving orientation in developing skills and knowledge in citizenship. On their part, Braungart and Braungart, (1998) stress the fact that there is a certain level of socialization amongst the younger people. Schools can socialize their members to become valued members, good citizens to enable them function well in their communities. As earlier seen by Mutch, citizenship touches on identity including political identity. Braungart and Braungart, (1998) stated that it is the responsibility of schools to stress to the young people the importance of local political involvement and political socialisation. They went on to define political socialization as the process of learning political attitudes and behaviour through social interaction. Lawton et al. (2000) warn that if people are politically undereducated or ill-educated, they

will become inactive members of their societies politically. Such people become dangerous because they can misrepresent the complexity of humanity and opt for simplistic solutions based on populist politics. Such people always encourage authoritarian and undemocratic solutions to complex societal issues. All this emphasizes the need for teaching citizenship education at early years of life. Lawton et al. (2000) believe that education systems with a citizenship education syllabus would enable the emergence of thinking citizens who would be less likely to seek solutions to conflicts through violence. That the young people should graduate from school with some confidence in their ability to participate in their society, to resolve conflict and, if they oppose a course of action, to express that opposition fairly, effectively and peacefully. According to Torney-Purta et al (2001) when young people know about democratic institutions and democratic processes, there is more chances of them voting when as adults. Also, the more they are taught about the importance of voting in school, the more likely they will indicate that they will vote. The more they are taught citizenship, the less they would be employed as thugs during campaigns and voting.

Jekayinfa (2004) emphasized that citizenship education through Social Studies produces healthy, good and active citizens who are patriotic, responsible, disciplined, well-informed and conscientious. If Nigeria as a country and its democracy are to remain secure and stable, the citizens must believe in the system and believe that it can work (Ayaaba et al, 2014). Unfortunately, Nigeria as a country today and its democracy are under threat. There are many cases of intra/inter-ethnic and religious clashes, ethnic militia, kidnapping, bomb blast, indiscipline, including leadership crises have become a common occurrence. It therefore has become imperative to emphasize teaching of citizenship education component of Social Studies in our schools. When this is done, it will help in developing young people into responsible citizens, who understand their rights and responsibilities and can play an active part in society. This paper therefore aimed at using cooperative learning method towards teaching practical citizenship education that will develop in individuals' skills,

attitudes and values that will enable them to show concern for the well being and dignity of others, respecting the worth of others and approaching civil decision in a rational manner.

Effects of Lack of Citizenship Education in Nigeria

Citizenship education is not taken with the seriousness it deserves in Nigeria. A typical example is that children and youth are always more aware of negative social values than the good ones. Their attitude towards things and people who do not form part of their own identity are usually negative. Politicians find them ready tools for use as tugs during political campaigns and voting. They snatch ballot boxes, thumb print ballot papers to rig election. According to Omo-Ojugo (2009) various efforts of government to tackle the national vices that have bedeviled the nation came to naught. Several agencies were established by the government with the hope of coping with the menace in the country but none succeeded.

According to Yusuf, (2011) the government of Nigeria and other countries of the world decided to introduce Social Studies into its education system so that it can help solve the nation's problems. Social Studies as a discipline, is known for handling issues of right types of morals, values and attitudes. The subject has taught people on rights and responsibilities. It is a discipline that handles citizenship education touching on the right issues, freedom, and duties. Children are brought up to work together based on respect for self and others.

Synergy between Social Studies and Citizenship Education

The United States' National Council for Social Studies (1993) defined Social Studies as "the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote citizenship competence". The Council is of the view that the primary purpose of Social Studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse democratic society in an interdependent world (National

Task Force on Standards for Teaching and Learning in Social Studies, 1993). In an effort to justify the close relationship between citizenship education with Social Studies, Blege (2001), stated that citizenship education is best taught and learned through Social Studies since issues discussed in the curriculum include the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values for active participation in the democratic life of society. To buttress this close link of citizenship education with Social Studies, Aggarwal (2001) postulates the closeness on ground that curriculum in Social Studies looks at issues like human relationships, the environment, society, democratic process etc. Social Studies offers the learners the education that enables them to fit and function effectively in the society by making their contributions towards the social, political and economic development of the society which are all citizenship issues.

On his part, Banks (1990) is of the view that citizenship education is an important area of study in a multicultural democratic society. This is because it is concerned with acquiring knowledge, skills values and attitudes that will make the society more democratic, humane, fair and just. Similarly, Ayaaba, Eshu, and Bordoh (2014) are of the opinion that citizenship issues have similar focus within the domain of Social Studies. They stated that it is most suitable and relevant to multicultural societies. Nigeria is multicultural, multiethnic and multireligious. The people differ in many respects, including ethnic, cultural, religious, political and economic orientations. Withing the same religion, there are some tiny differences. Those speaking the same dialects may have some slight differences. Those with the same political affiliation have their differences etc. Citizenship education through Social Studies will therefore give the opportunity to the students to examine and understand their cultural identifications and attachments and those of others and appreciate the differences that exist. They will be able to endorse and respect other cultures and identities.

Use of Cooperative Learning Method for Citizenship Education in Social Studies

Countries and people all over the world have indicated great desire for citizenship education. However, a great concern has been expressed with the instructional techniques in Social Studies that could promote proper citizenship education. It is not memorization of facts as most people think, but rather imparting the right skills, values and behaviours in the learner. Ayaaba, Eshun, and Bordoh (2014) were of the view that competent areas of practical skills like values and attitude are neglected. These are skill areas that could be practically displayed by the learners. Mhlauli (2012) warned that attitude or behaviours, knowledge and values learned by the learners contribute to maintaining peace and tranquility which enhances nation building. The tradition of handling citizenship in the classroom without the learners exploring their environment should be discouraged. Ayaaba, Eshun, and Bordoh recommended that the method to use should be child-centered, discovery in nature that can make learners active participants and problem solvers instead of just being passive and loaded with information by the teacher.

According to Ayaaba, Eshun, and Bordoh (2014) the adoption of issue-centered approach in teaching citizenship education allows learners to focus on investigating the issues in a problem-solving manner. This is often achieved through the use of strategies like co-operative learning, discussions, debates and fieldtrips. Ezegbe (1988) suggested that Social Studies lessons should be presented using a learning approach like cooperative learning method that tends to inculcate good citizenship values upon junior secondary students' whose poor attitude, poor self-concept, truancy and other vices result in poor academic achievement would be greatly improved. This emphasizes the incorporation of students with different levels of ability into groups where a variety of learning activities are used to help all team members successfully understand and complete assignments and Social Studies concepts (Borich, 2011).

Cooperative learning is an instructional strategy in which children work together in groups on a common task. The groups usually vary in size and are given the responsibility of creating a learning community. All the members of the groups interact together, initiate, plan and evaluate their own learning (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994). Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, (1994) further explained that cooperative learning method is a teaching strategy where students in small groups of varying size are given the responsibility of creating a learning community where they together participate significantly in meaningful interaction which enables them to initiate, plan and evaluate their own and each other's learning in an atmosphere or classroom devoid of any form of competition.

According to Johnson and Johnson, (1992), jig saw method is one strategy used in cooperative learning. The strategy divides topics to cover into smaller manageable portions as discussed above. Team of group of members are formed with each person being responsible for specific portion of the topic. Subsequently each person in charge of his topic will become the expert for that portion of their topic. Typical elements of jig saw method is that there is positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotion of peer interaction and development of social skills (Weidman, & Bishop, 2009)

Conclusion

Events of today's world have brought in the need for cooperative teaching strategy to be used since it can easily bring out observable changes in behavior of the learner. The learners are exposed to the environment, which gives them the opportunity for sharing and discussing with each other as a team. The strategy is also motivated by the current world need for inclusiveness. People of different abilities, ethnicities, gender, religious background should be able to put their heads together to learn. When that is done, people will appreciate their differences and learn to respect each other.

Suggestions

Citizenship Education, Social Studies and cooperative teaching strategy are interrelated. Therefore, the teaching of citizenship education using the ideas of cooperative learning strategy in Social Studies to achieve citizenship skills should be encouraged. There should be massive awareness programme sponsored by the government and non-governmental organizations with the use of cooperative learning method to mobilize and educate the youth on the political activities, and social vices that are on the increase in the country.

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