



Multiculturalism and Curriculum: Role of Education in Challenging Societal Division in Nigeria

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Received on 03/23/2019; revised on 04/11/2019; published on 04/28/2019

Abstract

Primarily, education is for the achievement of continuity in a society, but the globalization, technological and ecological change has touched and changed all aspects of human life (Zahabioun et al., 2012). In as much as education is used to identify the features and impacts of changes in human life, it is seen as a vehicle for enfranchising and drawing individuals and groups into full members of society (Tomlinson, 1989). Struggle for individuals' and groups' identity, recognition, inclusion and equality have been creating unending crises all over the world. Education has remained the actual instrument for challenging societal division and segregation. Although, there is neither genetic foundation for division of human ethnicity nor was there a difference in intelligence between different group of people identified historically by race (UNESCO, 1950; US Department of Energy, 2013; Vaavrus, 2015), but studies have shown that there have been segregation and inequality in education and society at large across race, colour, culture, religion and gender (Maio, 2001; Gándara and Aldana, 2014; Banks, 2015; Dowd and Bensimon, 2015). This study discusses and examines the role of education in challenging societal division. Multicultural and critical multicultural education were found to adopt an acceptable learning environment in order to increase academic opportunities of underrepresented groups in the educational system thereby reducing discrimination and prejudice against the marginalized groups. In Nigeria, like other countries of the world, citizenship education is a form of critical multicultural education taught in schools to educate individuals about citizenship from childhood.

Keywords: Curriculum, Teacher Education, Multicultural Education, Critical Multicultural Education, Citizenship Education

1 Introduction

This paper evaluates the role of education in challenging societal division. Education challenges societal division through the concept of multicultural and critical multicultural education. Multicultural and critical multicultural education has the potential to challenge societal division (Bank, 2009). This type of education includes all learners and inculcates in them the multicultural knowledge to live and contribute effectively in society. I will draw on relevant research evidence and theory to critically evaluate their role in challenging societal division by drawing on their characteristics and differences. Second, I will evaluate the role of citizenship education as a form of critical multicultural education in challenging the societal division with much emphasis on Nigeria. Finally, I will give a summary of the discussion.

2 Literature Review

The review and discussion of relevant literature are carried out in two segments: multicultural perspectives in education and critical multicultural perspectives in education.

2.1 Multicultural Education

Education is the process of teaching and learning so as to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, values, skill, habits and beliefs. Hand and Davies (2016) argue that education creates democratic societies and assists individuals to develop through participation. It is a process of developing desirable qualities' in individuals (Hirst and Peters, 1975). In discussing the curriculum process, Wheeler (1967) noted that education is a process of socialization and enculturation of individuals in the society; hence, education, society and culture are inseparable. Thus, as a result of this relationship, the quality of education, teaching and learning were seen as a result of the revolution in educational philosophy and theory that took place in the 1950s (Carr, 2016; Suissa, J, 2016; Barrow, 2016). Hence,

multicultural perspectives in education became a matter of discuss in other to accommodate people from a various background in education.

In multicultural viewpoints, education is intended to provide inclusive training to learners, where every individual are giving the opportunity to speak from any of their identities as well as 'listening to the plurality of voices a person can articulate' (Montecinos, 1995, pp300). This supports Tomlinson's view of education as a vehicle for enfranchising and drawing individuals and groups into full members of society. Montecinos (1995), however, reported that classroom dialog had been constrained by differentials in knowledge/power and institutional policies which tend to silence certain others and privilege certain perspectives (example, the white majority over the black minority in western countries, Muslims over Christians in Islamic countries, teachers over students). Consequently, the tenability of socialization and enculturation of individuals in society through education became a matter of discuss. Hence McKinney (2008) noted that individuals in a society are multi-ethnic and multi-cultural and therefore the need for the kind of education that will take into consideration the plurality of voices of individuals.

In view of this, comprehensive school reforms in the form of multicultural education became necessary to provide education to every individual in the society devoid of segregation and racism (Tonbuloglu, Aslan and Aydin, 2016; Beck, 1992) and the reform became prominent in the 1970s (Marrett, Mizuno and Collins, 1992). There is no agreed or one-way of defining multicultural education. In as much as some authors based their definitions on cultural characteristics or the skin colour of different groups of people, some rely on political, social and economic powers (Gay, 1994). Gay argues that multicultural education is a policy that aimed at presenting equal academic opportunities which will allow learners to succeed, thereby giving each individual opportunity to express their cultural, social, and ethnic and colour differences. Also, Bank (2009, pp13) defines multicultural education as 'an approach to school reform designed to actualise educational equality for students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, social class and linguistic groups.

Multicultural education is aimed at improving society for the benefit of all by integrating individuals into the existing society and by helping to develop necessary skills and a knowledge base that will uphold multiculturalism (Grant and Sleeter, 2007). Considering the socio-political context, Nieto and Bode (2008) argue that multicultural education is basic education and a comprehensive school reform process with the aim for all learners rejecting and challenging racism and any form of segregation and discrimination in the society and schools. Hence schools are reformed around equality and plurality principles so as to contribute to wider social reform.

2.2 Critical Multicultural Education

It has been argued that multicultural education is an ideological device and systematic way of perpetuating and prolonging racist exploitation of minority ethnic groups 'by pampering their cultural sensitivities' (Gillborn, 2005, pp114). Also in the discussion of 'colour of number and deficit-thinking about race and class, Gillborn (2015) pointed out that multicultural education is a "hidden plan for institutional racism" where teachers underestimate the abilities of black students thereby undermining their chances of academic success; hence multicultural education contains processes and structures of racism in education. Critical multicultural education (CME) is the recognition of the construction of differences based on 'lack of power and the subordinate identity of people and groups' (James, 2001, pp190). However, Lei and Grant (2001) noted that the debate and controversy over the merits of multicultural education began to emerge in

the 1990s. Multicultural education theorists were critiqued by critical multiculturalists due to concerns about the limits of multicultural education (May, 2009; Sleeter, 1995).

The critique led to the emergence of critical multicultural education which shifts emphasis from cultural issues to other issues such as racism and socioeconomic segregation as well as reduction of the use of psychological solutions to socio-structural and political problems. Nieto (2004) reported that the socio-political context was central to the understanding of critical multicultural education. The author's sociopolitical theory is in the context that education takes into consideration the larger political and social forces that operate in a given society as well as the impact which they may have on the learners. Nieto's theoretical framework is in line with Vavrus' (2015) argument that critical multicultural education is aimed at social, knowledge and power change rather than discrimination. Moreover, both teachers and their method of teaching are vital in a critical multicultural approach. Tonbuloglu, Aslan and Aydin (2016) have stated that teachers need to understand the social, ethnic and racial diversities of their learners so as to apply appropriate educational techniques in their classroom teaching.

3 Role of Multicultural and Critical Multicultural Education in Challenging Societal Division

The goal of multicultural and critical multicultural education is argued to be enlightenment of learners in terms of democracy, freedom and equality (Moland, 2015), though multicultural education theorists are more interested in cultural aspects with less attention on gender, power and economic equality which authors noted as the main concern of critical multicultural education (May, 2009; Sleeter, 1995).

3.1 Multicultural Education

Education is a veritable tool for challenging societal division and segregation. Division or segregation manifests itself in the form of race, colour, ethnicity, culture or social class. Also in an educational system, Tonbuloglu et al. (2016) reported that diversity occurs in the division of students into classes within or outside the school (example, arranging male or female, white or black, tall or short students separately).

In every pluralist society, there is a dominant cultural and ethnic group that controls economic resources, social rewards and power; hence, the attempt to manipulate and maintain the same power through education and curriculum (Wang, 2009). Wang reported that educational institutions use the curriculum as an ordered plan for selecting knowledge for the learners. The curriculum includes written and hidden curricula which contain values and beliefs predominant in the society; these values and beliefs determine the ways teachers perceive their functions as well as their attitudes towards learners from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Consequently, the conflict between school and home cultures are effectively managed through the multicultural education perspective, as it helps learners from diverse cultural orientations mediate between their school cultures and home cultures (Huang, 2001).

Montecinos (1995) reported that the main component of multicultural education is teachers' ability in managing their preconceptions and prejudices in dialoguing with a learner who is from the diverse culture in their teaching. Hence, multicultural education helps teachers in developing racialized consciousness such as socio-political, cultural competence which will assist them in becoming better educators (Picower, 2015)

In order to reduce the negative impact on the minority students' psychological well-being and self-esteem, Huang (2001, pp129) noted that

teachers in ME perspectives should always change their speech and teaching styles during teaching to 'reflect cultural backgrounds of different students'. Moreover, in order for a multicultural education to bridge the societal division, it is argued that teachers should understand who they teach (Tobitt, 1981). In doing this, they will develop a good relationship with the students that will allow students to care about school (Valenzuela, 2010; Noddings, 2015). Tobitt noted that in a multicultural education perspective, learners should be taught to value cultural difference, to know the meaning of culture as a concept and to be accepting of the rights of others.

In America, schools 'Americanize' the immigrants by teaching them values, languages and behaviour so as to integrate them into American culture. The US has been designated as the country marked by racial inequality (Picower, 2015). Picower argues that though classrooms in the US are increasingly filled with children of colours; yet half of the schools in US do not have a single teaching staff of colour. This the author noted is creating a pattern for racial achievement and opportunity through White teachers. In other to bridge social injustice and educational inequality, ethnic studies were introduced in some US schools as part of multicultural education to give pupils ethnic groups sense of belonging. The ethnic studies were recently critiqued and banned due to concern about teaching resentment towards the class of people or ethnic solidarity instead of treating students as individuals (Bank, 2017).

However, integrating and raising academic standard of students of other colour through multicultural education started declining as a result of the 1983 blockbuster education report release "A Nation at Risk". The report that standards of education were slipping and America was at risk of other competing nations in the educational race (Ravitch, 2010). The report recommended improving curriculums, raising standards, and upgrading textbooks and teacher preparation as a way of raising educational standards. Consequently, standardized testing, school choice, competition and accountability were introduced in the US education system as a way of improving education standard (Ravitch, 2010). Hence, student performance and test scores became the yardstick for evaluating teachers, administrators, and schools. The reports' recommendation for improving standards were argued as an effort to avoid finding solutions to low student achievement caused by racial segregation and poverty (Sleeter, and Carmona, 2016; Ravitch, 2016). Since "A Nation at Risk" and "No Child Left Behind", the attention being given to multicultural education with the aimed of getting students along with their academics and improving learning has been shifted to standard and student test scores in other to attract more fund from the government (Grant and Sleeter, 2013).

In India, boarding schools were established to civilize the natives, thereby forbidding the children from speaking their native languages and observing native religions (Banks, 1986, pp30). Banks noted that having multicultural education in the curriculum helps in inculcating in the learners towards positive attitudes and respect for the individual's own culture, language and religion.

In the United Kingdom (UK), the debate is still ongoing on whether faith-based schools, shared education or state schools have the potential to resolve societal division (Hughes and Donnelly, 2012; Short, 2003). Faith-based schools are schools established and run by religious bodies such as the Catholic or Protestant Churches; shared education is the coming together of schools run by different religious bodies in some occasions to share views on different issues, while state schools are those that are fully financed by the government.

In Northern Ireland (NI) in particular, religiously separate education that will 'act as a moral compass for the society as a whole' as well as providing education to children at the expectation of the parents was

backed up by Education Act of 1930 (Jenkins, 205, p44; Donnelly, 2012). It was also argued that the government of Northern Ireland faithfully satisfies the statutory obligation on providing separate schools so as to reduce community conflict and promote inter-community and societal cohesion (Hughes and Donnelly, 2012). However, authors argue that both Catholic schools and Protestant schools uphold quite different religious values and principles that reflect and represent the societal division; hence, this perpetuates tensions, segregation and sectarian differences within the society (IRISH, 1969, pp12; Meer, Pala, Mohood and Simon, 2009; Donnelly, 2012). In addition, there has been reports that during early 2000 there was mass separation of students by ethnicity, class and religion in the UK by faith-based schools due to indirect support received from the government as a result of the policies encouraging competition and choice between schools (Tomlinson, 2009; Osler and Starkey, 2009). Moreover, faith-based schools were criticised for ignoring students' autonomy by exposing them to religious instructions against their wishes (Jenkins, 2005).

Consequent upon the criticism of the segregation problem inherent in faith-based schools, Catholic and Protestant schools in NI agreed to work together in the form of shared education on a voluntary basis to share their resources for common educational goals and objectives. Hughes and Donnelly (2012, pp497) examined articles and papers written by various authors on shared education in NI and noted that 'sustained interaction between divided groups', which is the goal of shared education, enhances inter-group understanding and reduces prejudice within the group. Hughes and Donnelly noted that various authors were of the opinion that shared education contributed positively to promoting behavioural tendencies and good attitude among different groups, hence, shared education promote community cohesion.

However, the state schools were established to integrate community needs into the school system (Byrne and Donnelly, 2006). These schools are purely financed by the government; hence the government exercises much control on the running and supervision of such schools. The analyst and critics critiqued the state school as educational apartheid practices by the government (Lynch, Modgil and Modgil, 1992). Contrary to this view, Halstead and McLaughlin, (2005) stated that respect, goodwill and tolerance towards one another, which is the civic virtues expected in the multicultural societies, are easily developed in state controlled schools in England. Bank (2017) highlights five dimensions of multicultural education to include: content integration, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social culture.

3.2 Critical Perspectives in Multicultural Education

During the last three decades, there has been an outcry that schools are not meeting the legitimate needs of different groups living within the same society, such as pupils from ethnic minorities, females and lower working class children. Troyna (1993) found that education practitioners and policy makers have been avoiding coming to terms with the basic wish of ethnically and culturally mixed societies. Among the four major approaches to multiculturalism suggested by Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997), the key one is critical multiculturalism. Whereas the goal of education is to nurture students in accepting dominant ideologies and directives religiously, a critical multicultural education nurtures students towards critical thinking and improvement in the society as well as improving their decision making ability (Banks, 2004; Yasemin, 2016). May and Sleeter (2010), noted that the theory of multicultural education lies within a cultural context and framework of maintaining unequal power relations in daily interactions.

Consequently, Zembylas and Iasonos (2017, pp4) found that critical multiculturalism acknowledges the importance of power relations and challenges inequalities in 'shaping dominant discourses and practices'. Zembylas and Iasonos argue that critical multicultural education is noted for the training of learners in order to challenge differences that are connected to social injustices within society. They opined that critical multicultural education is aligned with antiracist and critical race theory and thus challenges any form of injustices and racism. Hence, effective learning and teaching of gender, the rule of law, linguistic and cultural knowledge were incorporated in most nations' education curriculum.

Beard (2016) stated that critical multicultural education enhances educators' capacity to create a responsive learning environment thereby increasing the academic performance of underrepresented groups in the school system. Moreover, it is argued that through CME students receive instruction that enables them to confront prejudicial attitudes, gain accurate cultural knowledge and have a firm commitment to social justice (Estrada and Matthews, 2016). In view of this, Huang (2001) opined that prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy and knowledge construction were as a result of curricular reform introducing CME in Chinas' National Curriculum which led to the inclusion of ethnic groups and women voices in China. However, in Marshal's (2015, pp1) 'You Lie Moment' and Park's (2016, pp127) 'Opportunity for dialogue are scarce in classrooms' both authors argue that the impact of CME with regard to prejudices reduction, racism and social justice are yet to be felt especially in the United States of America where CME has been in operation for a decade.

In the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland in particular, McEwen (1999, p40) argue that education builds a basis for diverse communities to understand and appreciate one another's 'viewpoints and aspirations'. Also, Furey et al. (2016) stated that government legislation empowers educational institutions in Northern Ireland to seek to eliminate racism and promote good relations and equal opportunity between individuals of different ethnic and racial groups. Consequently, the government deemed it necessary to break the transmission of prejudice from one generation to another and also to equip individuals with knowledge and skills to challenge prejudiced and discriminatory views held by introducing revised curriculum containing CME learning in schools in 2007 (Chaney, 2011).

Although, there have been critiques of education in this regard to say that education has contributed immensely in challenging societal division is not an over statement. Social justice, which is the cardinal goal of critical multicultural education (Zembylas and Iasonos, 2017), is being witnessed and welcomed in almost every nation. Studies have shown that critical multicultural education has found its way into the national curriculum of several countries of the world in several ways such as; social studies, civic or citizenship education, government, social justice education, multicultural social work education, community and culture in education and a host of others (Starkey, 2000; Andrews and Mycock, 2007; Awhen, Edinyang and Ipuole, 2014; Fulmer and Makepeace, 2015; Conversion, 2016; Bell, 2016; Rosen, McCall and Goodkind, 2017).

4 Citizenship Education (CE)

This section will briefly review relevant literature on citizenship education and then evaluate its role in challenging societal division in Nigeria.

For the purpose of this study, it is necessary to fully outline the meaning of citizenship before going on to citizenship education. Citizenship is argued to be a contested concept (Figueroa, 2004; Hanna, 2017). Figueroa noted that citizenship might either emphasize the relationship with a state or with society and is the obligations and legal right of individuals within the nation. These rights include economic welfare, political participation, justice, liberty and benefiting from social heritage. Inhabitants or people

of a state are equalized through citizenship by being bestowed upon them the same right, duty and obligations irrespective of other differences that may exist (Marshal, 1950; Moodley and Adam, 2004). A citizen is defined as a person who enjoys all legal rights and privileges given by a state to people within its territory and is obligated to perform the duties and comply with the laws of the state (Musa and Etta, 2014). Citizenship can, therefore, be defined as being a legal or legitimate member of the society, state or nation.

The goal of education is the preparation of students for jobs and active citizenship (Grant and Sleeter, 2013). Grant and Sleeter found that in previous years, education paid much more attention to job preparation than to citizenship which is now being popularised. Studies have shown that immigration patterns in the world in this century have increased the social, economic, cultural and racial diversity of student populations within schools in every nation and thus calls for repositioning of students for universal consciousness (McGinnis, 2015; Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hillard, 2004; Levitt and Waters, 2002); hence, there is a challenge in the youth identity, citizenship and power construction relationship as a result of the feelings of exclusion and inclusion across gender, ethnicity, race and socioeconomics (McGinnis, 2015). Consequently, the need for citizenship education attracted attention since it was argued to be a cure for societal division (Ploeg and Guerin, 2016). Ploeg and Guerin noted that developing student' dispositions conducive for active participation and solidarity in society through citizenship education in schools will help redress the problem.

Osler and Starkey (2010) traced the origin of citizenship education to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Niens and McLrath (2010) stated that the emergence of citizenship education was as a result of the global desire for an educational programme that will help battle antisocial behaviours, renew interest in citizenship, alleviate political apathy, and prepare individuals for the ever changing economy and labour market. To this end, several Nations' government agreed to fulfil their international obligations through teaching citizenship in schools (Osler and Starkey, 2010) as a concept that would emphasize critical thinking, democratic values, debating and listening skills (Niens and McLrath, 2010).

Citizenship education (CE) is argued to be a multidimensional and complex construct (McGinnis, 2015) in that creating the curriculum and practices of citizenship education in order to create good citizen requires the knowledge of what type of values that are acceptable as well as what is not acceptable (Fischman and Hass, 2012). Hanna (2017) stated that citizenship education generally focuses on the state and her citizens' issues; hence, the effectiveness of citizenship education rest on its strength in incorporating exposure to many different views on different topics. Hence, Fischman and Hass contended that schools, curriculum, the practice of citizenship education and actions of the society are incorporating to manage the divisions and tensions that evolve from the inequality of daily lived reality and egalitarianism in the democratic principles. Citizenship education is a form of critical multicultural education for the training of learners to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for taking actions and making reflective decisions to make their society just and democratic (Banks, 2004). Swarts and Dahlstrom's (2001) view of multicultural education aimed at equity, access, equality and democracy that will take into account the need of small and marginalised communities was consistent with Dewey's vision of democracy that perceived a community of differing groups and individuals in dialogue (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1997). Torres's (2001) 'Enlightenment' theory for the notion of citizenship and modern education is considered necessary when discussing citizenship education. Torres noted that the social and historical construction of a person's identity and individual socialization is very important and should be

addressed by educational institutions. Kerr (2003), argues that citizenship education has no precise definition because of competing contexts and conceptions. He conceptualised citizenship education as encompassing the preparation of individuals for their responsibilities and roles as citizens.

Citizenship education is a unique opportunity for promoting education that assists the individual to live in a diverse community sharing common values through the development of attitudes and competencies such as tolerance, critique, open and democratic mindedness (Lee, 2002; Osler and Starkey, 2010). In line with Torres's (2001) citizenship education enlightenment theory, authors argue that the quest for citizenship education was due to growing international concern about youths' lack of civic and political engagement (Johnson, 2016; Stuteville and Johnson, 2016); hence youth are enlightened through citizenship education.

Citizenship education has gained ground in so many countries such as the United States of America, United Kingdom, Turkey, Nigeria and a host of other countries. However, Johnson noted that a standard curriculum in citizenship education in the US education system helps in instilling values of citizenship in their youth. The study also shows that citizenship education in the United States makes citizenship accessible to all individuals through education that challenges exclusionary, racist and jingoistic policies that favour dominant ethnic and social groups (Wegner, 2013). In Northern Ireland, citizenship education was introduced in the National curriculum in 2007 (Andrews and Mycock, 2007) and was aimed at teaching how to participate and contribute democratically in the society as well as making informed decisions throughout their lives (Hanna, 2017). In order for citizenship education to achieve these noble objectives, Hanna (2017, pp19) noted that the two key themes around which CE in Northern Ireland was built are 'Diversity and Inclusion' and 'Human Right and Social Responsibility'. Although the explanation for these two themes is beyond this paper, Hanna argues that in the CE agenda in Northern Ireland, dealing with differences appears to be a high priority. Studies also show that adding CE programme in Northern Ireland school's curriculum created a more inclusive and tolerant society in the racist, ethnically and religiously divided society of Northern Ireland (Gallagher, 2007; O'Connor and Faas, 2011; Niens, O'Connor & Smith, 2013). In Turkey, senses of belonging are inculcated in their citizens from different ethnic and religious backgrounds through citizenship education (Ibrahimoglu, 2015). Perhaps, I can conclude with Bickmore and Parker's (2014) opinion that the key element of democratic citizenship education is a dialogue about social and political conflicts.

5 Nigeria

Due to the amalgamation of former Southern and Northern Protectorates in 1914 by the colonial master (Britain), people from a different cultural, ethnic, social and religious background with different philosophies and ideologies were coerced to form a common nation-Nigeria (Alubo, 2004; Enu and Eba, 2014). After the independence, because of the diverse ethnic, cultural and religious composition of the new nation, it was required to look for a way to promote committed citizens against the earliest ethnic, cultural and religious cleavages. Consequent upon this, education was seen as common ground for promoting and fostering national citizenship, unity and consciousness (Oyeleke, 2011). Dustin (1999) noted that forming good citizens is not a day's work and in order to have good citizens, there is a need to educate individuals from childhood. In order to achieve this, there was the National Curriculum Conference in November 1969 at the then National Assembly Hall Lagos which was followed by National Seminar in 1973 (Fafunwa, 1974). The seminar discussed the National

Conference recommendations and adopted the National Policy on Education as the Nigeria Educational Policy framework which was first published in 1976.

The education policy document stated that schools and its curriculum would help in achieving Nigerias' educational goal of creating good citizens which were derived from Nigeria's national philosophy and goals (FME, 1976) as contained in the policy document. The goals as contained in FME include a society which is;

- Free and democratic
- Just and egalitarian
- Full of bright opportunities for all citizens

These national goals encompass what Sunal, Gaba and Osa (1987) termed beliefs, due process, equality, justice, freedom, diversity, privacy, protection, participation and responsibility that formed the basis for the citizenship education. Social studies were then used initially as a curriculum framework for fostering citizenship and were taught in both primary and secondary schools (FME, 2004; Oyeleke, 2011).

However, in a heterogeneous society such as Nigeria with about 250 ethnic groups, people are distinguished by religion, gender, ethnicity, social and economic class (Nduka, 2004; Omo-Ojugo, 2009). Consequent upon this, the social studies curriculum was restructured to exploit these diversities for greatness. Moreover, Oyeleke (2011) noted that in order to consolidate and sustain democracy, values such as tolerance, equality, justice, liberty and service must be inculcated in the individuals. To challenge the societal division in the new democratic dispensation in Nigeria, the citizenship education aspect of social studies was removed to form a separate subject called civic education which was introduced in primary and secondary schools in 2007 and designed towards promoting active citizenship (Musa and Etta, 2015; Yusuf, Agbonna, Jekayinfa and Saliu, 2011). Studies show that CE fosters the much-needed understanding, knowledge, unity and skills for the survival and development of Nigeria society (Falade, 2008; Yusuf, Agbonna, Jekayinfa and Saliu, 2011). Anumba (2013) stated that teaching CE in Nigerian schools enables children and young ones to acquire comprehensive knowledge, not only of the local environment, state or the nation but also their statutory rights, duties, obligations and expectations necessary to conform to the standard way of life, rules and regulations of the state and the nation at large. It was also argued that CE exposes the learners to appropriate learning activities, skills and experiences that assist them in developing appropriate values, attribute as well as raising their civic consciousness for good relationships in Nigeria society (Iyamu and Obiunu, 2005).

The content of the school civics curriculum for teaching citizenship education for the primary and secondary schools in a pluralistic nation like Nigeria include;

- Citizenship, National Consciousness, Community, Identity, Representative Democracy, Nigerian Constitution, Human Rights, Rights and Obligation of Nigerian Citizens and Social Issues.
- Our Values, Rule of Law, Government and Civil Society, Popular Participation and Health Issues.
- Duties and Responsibilities of Citizens, National Economic Life, Peace and Conflicts.

Source: Nigerian Educational and Research Development Council (NERDC), 2007.

Examining Nieto's (2004) socio-political and Vavrus' (2015) critical multicultural education aims of social, knowledge and power change along with Nigeria's civic core curriculum for challenging societal division and promoting democratic values, one can perhaps liken it to Banks (2004, pp432) 'core of a curriculum for diversities and democracy'. Moreover, the curriculum stresses the importance of learning about community

and identity. This is in line with Parker's (2004) argument of studying ethnicity if the learners are to learn the concept and understand its diversity locally and internationally. Ugwuozor (2016) argues that the activities of Nigerians are rocked by ethnic and regional storms; hence, a civic education curriculum is planned to acculturate Nigerians from childhood into a more acceptable civic culture and peaceful coexistence through effective citizenship participation (NERDC, 2007; Nwaubani and Okafor, 2015). The civic culture and peaceful coexistence were justified in the study of 'civic education as a collaborative dimension of social studies education' in which Dania (2015, pp48) noted that civic education and social studies are directed towards the attainment of social justice and political ethics.

However, despite the noble aims and objectives of CE in challenging the societal diversities in Nigeria, the curriculum seemed to have suffered some setback on its implementation. In teaching citizenship, it is suggested that teachers bridge the gap between theory and practice by suiting their teaching strategies to students' real life situations for easy understanding in a local context (Wilson, 1992). The critics argue that the programme focussed on rote learning and memorization with less emphasis on questioning and analysis (Enu and Eba, 2014). The authors noted that the curriculum and instructions for teaching citizenship education were patterned after the colonial master's dictatorship model which does not encourage questioning that will provide students with opportunities for creativity and critical thinking needed for decision-making and problem solving as suggested by Kumi-Yaboah and Smith (2016). Questioning and analysis give the student the confidence to act as the participant and team member in the citizenship education system rather than being the subject. To this end, Dewey (1941) stated that subjecting the mind to ready-made and outside material is denying the ideal of democracy founded on moral principle and personal belief. Moreover, the civic education curriculum for teaching citizenship education is argued to be the product of some compelling forces such as societal outcry, military decree, and research findings (Oyeleke, 2011). Authors questioned the efficacy of CE in meeting the desired objective as it was borne out of parochial interest (Oyeleke, 2011) since it does not involve active participation by the students (Sunal, Gaba and Osa, 1987; Falade, 2008). The author opined that citizenship instruction should cut across all field of studies rather than narrowing it to only a citizenship education curriculum.

Moreover, textbooks for teaching CE are seen as contributing factors militating against CE in meeting its goal of challenging illegal practices and behaviours. It was reported that standard textbooks were in short supply and the available ones were shallow in content (Oyeleke, 2011); hence, issues and topics were limited to a simple definition. In spite of these challenges, citizenship education has the capability of providing learners with opportunities to investigate the manner in which racism, identity, power relation and sectarianism can cause division and conflict as well as inculcating in them the skills and knowledge necessary to manage and resolve crisis or conflict within the society.

6 Conclusion

This paper discussed the role of education in challenging societal division and found that multicultural education is an education for pluralism. Multicultural education helps in reducing discrimination and prejudice against the oppressed group by developing pedagogical policies and practices that allow the prevention of silencing some groups and privileging certain perspectives. Critical multicultural education arose as a result of multicultural education placing too much emphasis on cultural diversity instead of other areas such as gender, rights, economic and socio-political issues.

It was observed that critical multicultural education creates a responsive learning environment thereby increasing academic opportunities of underrepresented groups in the school system to allow them to receive instructions that enable them to confront prejudicial attitudes, have accurate cultural knowledge and have a firm commitment to social justice. In Nigeria, like other countries of the world, citizenship education is a form of critical multicultural education taught in schools to educate individuals about citizenship from childhood. Though citizenship education encountered challenges such as unavailability of textbooks and improper implementation, it was acknowledged that citizenship education had gone a long way in challenging societal diversities since its introduction as a subject in schools in Nigeria. For more effective results, it is recommended that demonstrative, collaborative and participatory approach methods should be adopted in teaching citizenship education rather than teaching for memorization.

Acknowledgements

No acknowledgements

Funding

No funding

Conflict of Interest: none declared.

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