

Civic Education in Nigeria's One Hundred Years of Existence: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract

This paper examined civic education in Nigeria's one hundred years of existence. The paper pointed out that civic education equipped the citizens with democratic skills that strengthen the civil society. The paper gave the historical account of civic education in Nigeria and emphasized that training for civic responsibility was one of the major goals of the traditional education in Nigeria. Before the introduction of Western education in Nigeria, the existing traditional education was concerned with training the children for social responsibility and political participation. The paper posited that Western education had not given enough attention to character and civic training in Nigeria. Some of the problems confronting civic education in Nigeria include: disorganized and duplicated Civic Education curriculum; unstable civic education programme; lack of adequate human resources for civic education; recitation and rote learning of civic values and skills and non-implementation of Social Studies at the Senior Secondary School level. The paper concluded that if Civic Education was well taught in Nigerian schools it would help in engineering sustainable value-reorientation which could break the vicious circle of socio-political and economic problems in the country.

Keywords: civic education, civic responsibility, traditional education, civics, social studies

INTRODUCTION

One of the major problems that has hindered national integration, unity and development in Nigeria, after her one hundred years of existence, as a nation, is the low level of the acquisition and demonstration of civic norms by the citizens. Alao (2012) posited that although Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and natural resources, there is no meaningful development because many citizens are intellectually and socially deficient. According to Okan and Lawal (2011)

...the problem of 'negative citizenship' values have gravely militated against Nigeria's march towards effective and sustained socio-economic 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 through a commitment to the ideals rooted in civic education. p. 11

Civic Education (CE) plays a significant role in the development of a nation. This is because the development of a nation hinges on good and effective citizenship. No nation can thrive beyond the civic values and traits demonstrated by her citizens. This is the reason why civic values constitute the necessary foundation of a virile nation (Okan and Lawal, 2011). Martin Luther, cited in Akinjide (2006) expressed

that the prosperity of a nation depends not on the abundance of its revenue, nor on the strength of its fortification, nor on the beauty of its public buildings, but it consists in the number of its cultivated citizens, in its men of education, enlightenment and character

Ajere (2006) observed that the Nigerian schools serve as literacy centres where emphasis is placed on certificate acquisition rather than ethics and morals like honesty, patriotism, loyalty, modesty and obedience. The little emphasis put on civic education is one of the factors responsible for the spate of moral decadence, youth restiveness, cyber crime, terrorist activities and other social vices that are currently posing threat to the survival of Nigeria as a nation. Falade and Falade (2013) argued that Nigeria cannot attain national integration that could foster growth, development and national transformation except the citizens acquire and demonstrate civic values and traits.

Nigeria, at her one hundred years of existence, has not developed a stable school programme and mechanism that can entrench political participation, value re-orientation, patriotic ideals and civic engagement in the citizenry. The objective of this paper is to give the historical analysis of civic education in the Nigerian school programme. The

paper also intends to discuss the problems and prospects of civic education in Nigeria.

MEANING OF CIVIC EDUCATION

Civic Education is concerned with the development of values, social norms, skill and democratic ideals in the citizens. According to Utulu (2011), Civic Education becomes very relevant since it essentially seeks to introduce learners to the process of democratic socialization by promoting support for democratic behaviours and values among citizens. Mezieobi, cited by Okan and Lawal (2011) sees civic education as the educative means in a sovereign state whereby the citizens or individuals become socially and politically aware, socially integrated into the social milieu, acquire social skills and competence, become socially responsible for maximum productivity and development, all in the interest of the state.

Starkey (1992) describes Civic Education as a programme that helps children to know that they have rights but also duties. It enables the learners to develop a sense of good respect for the law and affection for the Republic. Civic Education implies an understanding of the rules of democratic life and its fundamental principles. Civic Education teaches about the political system; it emphasizes the rights, roles and duties of every member of the society. The goal of Civic Education is the development of responsible citizenship. It aims at equipping the learners with the political, culture, democratic ideals and values that will enable them to function as effective and productive citizens.

Civic Education is the training for equity, justice, responsibility, freedom, patriotism, honesty and obedience to rules and regulations guiding the civil society (Falade, 2012). Civic Education is a set of practices and activities aimed at making young people and adults better equipped to participate actively in democratic life by assuming and exercising their rights and responsibilities in the society (Birzea; Harrison; Krek; Spajicurkas, 2005). Birzea et al, (2005) identified the characteristics of Civic Education as:

- (i) a life-long learning experiences. Civic Education is life-long in the sense that it occurs during the entire life-course. It begins from the day the child is born and it continues throughout his life span. Civic education includes a series of learning environment inside and outside formal institutions.
- (ii) an educational programme which aims at preparing individuals and communities for civic and political participation. Civic Education strengthens the civil society by helping to make its citizens informed and knowledgeable and endowing them with democratic skills,
- (iii) programme that implies respecting rights and accepting responsibilities.

- (iv) a programme that values cultural and social diversity. Civic Education is social learning. It is learning in society, about society and for society. Civic Education promotes egalitarianism in a democratic and multi-cultural society.

HISTORY OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The history of Civic Education in Nigeria can be categorized into the following stages: (i) The Informal or Traditional Era (ii) Single Subject Era (iii) Integrated Era (iv) Disarticulation Era (v) Merging and harmonization era.

The Informal or Traditional Era

Civic training is not a recent development in Nigeria. Before Nigeria came into existence in 1914, Civic Education was part of the informal or traditional education in the different localities that were merged together as a single nation. Training for civic responsibility and effective citizenship were essential aspects of traditional education in various parts of Nigeria. Before the introduction of western education in Nigeria, the existing traditional education was concerned with training the children for social responsibility and political participation. Fafunwa (2004) explained that indigenous African education places considerable emphasis on character training. It emphasizes social responsibility, job orientation, political participation, spiritual and moral values. In the traditional Nigerian society, all parents want their children to be upright, honest, kind and helpful to others.

Therefore training for civic responsibility is one of the major goals of the traditional education. The child is made to acquire the skills and values that will make him to function effectively and efficiently in the civil society. Adeyemi and Salawudeen (2014) identified some of the virtues that are emphasized in the traditional Yoruba society as: justice and fair play, hard work, respect and humility, decency and morality, patience and endurance, honesty and transparency, cooperation and good behaviours.

Single Subject Era

During the colonial era and shortly after the Nigeria independence, civics was taught as a single subject in the Nigeria elementary schools. Ogundare (2011) pointed out that in Nigeria, before and immediately after independence in 1960, the upper primary and lower classes of secondary schools were offering civics to their pupils. The subject lost its status and identity to what was called General Knowledge and with the coming of Social Studies in 1971, civics became an integral part of Social Studies. Commenting on the goals of civics at that time, Falaye (2008) emphasized that civics teaches the learner how men and women organize, regulate and

manage their desires, feelings, works and their lives in such a way that peace, law and order exist in the society. The subject deals with the qualities which every member of the community must possess, the duties expected from each citizen and the rights, which each citizen should enjoy. The purpose of teaching this subject at that time was to develop in the child those attitudes and skills required for participation in the civil society. Some of the contents of the subject are: Levels, arms and duties of the government; Nigeria and the outside world; the individual in the society; voluntary organizations; democracy, rights and duties of the citizen.

Apart from the formal teaching of Civic Education concepts in the primary and secondary schools, voluntary youth associations were organized. Some of the youth organizations that were established include: Boy Scout, Girls' Guides and Boys' Brigade. These organizations were meant to give the youth the opportunity to serve the community. The operation and activities of the voluntary associations were meant to inculcate in the youths the values and traits of good citizenship.

Integrated Era

After the Nigeria independence in 1960, it was discovered that the inherited school programmes were foreign in nature. They had little or no relevance to the prevailing problems and situations in the country. As a result of this, there was the need to revamp the school curriculum. The search for the kind of school programme that could develop in the citizens those knowledge, skills and attitudes that they need to be useful to themselves and the society at large led to the introduction of the integrated Social Studies in Nigeria in the 1960s.

With the coming of Social Studies, civics became an integral part of Social Studies in 1971 (Ogundare, 2011). Civic concepts like citizenship, democracy, civic rights and responsibilities, leadership and followership were incorporated into the Social Studies curriculum. The integration of civic concepts into Social Studies curriculum was possible because Social Studies teaches values and social norms. According to Mezieobi (2011) Social Studies curriculum provides wide arrays of contents and learning experiences to promote the frontiers of Civic Education.

Udoh cited by Ogundare (2011) pointed out that during the 1991 Curriculum Review Conference, it was decided that Citizenship Education should be taught as part of Social Studies at certain levels of education in Nigeria.

Disarticulation Era

The Nigerian government started a 9-Year Basic Education Programme in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The 9-Year Basic Education Programme was also

aimed at implementing the objectives of the National Economic and Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS). The objectives of NEEDS are: value-reorientation, poverty eradication, job creation, wealth generation and using education to empower people (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council- NERDC, 2007).

In view of this, there was the need to review, re-structure and re-align the existing primary and junior secondary school curricula into a 9-Year Basic Education Programme. In 2005, the National Council on Education approved a new curriculum structure for primary and junior secondary schools in Nigeria. The newly approved curriculum is referred to as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) curriculum. The UBE curriculum structure provided for Lower Basic Education Curriculum (Primaries 1-3); Middle Basic Education Curriculum (Primaries 4-6) and Upper Basic Education Curriculum (JSS 1-3).

An important aspect of the new UBE curriculum was the introduction of new school subjects at the Lower, Middle and Upper Basic Education levels. This was responsible for the re-emergence of Civic Education, as a separate school subjects, at the primary and secondary school levels. Civic Education contents were disarticulated from Social Studies and by 2007 a 9-Year Civic Education curriculum for the Basic Education Programme was designed. Since then, Civic Education is taught as a separate and compulsory school subject in Nigerian primary and secondary schools.

Commenting on the introduction of Civic Education as a compulsory subject, Sam Egwu, a former Minister of Education declared that it was part of President Umaru Yar'Adua's 7-point agenda geared towards the enhancement of human capital development. The introduction of the subject was designed to refocus, re-invigorate and reposition our great country to further realize her full potentials as envisioned by our founding fathers (Jekayinfa, Mofoluwawo and Oladiran, 2011).

Merging and Harmonization Era

In October 2010, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria convened a National Stakeholders Forum to deliberate on the State of Education in Nigeria. Delegates at the summit called for immediate action to reduce the number of subjects offered at the Basic Education level. Consequently, NERDC was directed to review the 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) in line with the recommendations of the Summit (NERDC, 2012). In view of this, related UBE school subjects were merged to form new subjects. For instance, Islamic Studies, Christian Religious Studies, Social Studies, Civic Education and Security Education were merged

to form a new school subject called Religion and National Values.

According to NERDC (2012), in the context of the current reduction, selection and harmonization of the UBE Curriculum title, *Religion and National Values* is the umbrella embracing the previously autonomous subjects of Religious Studies (Christian Religion and/Islamic Studies), Civic Education, Social Studies and a new addition, Security Education. The rationale for the new title is the need to emphasize the importance of values across the educational spectrum. In this new arrangement, each of the subjects that was merged becomes a theme under the umbrella subject title.

Problems Confronting Civic Education Programme in Nigeria

Civic Education is faced with a number of problems in Nigeria. Some of these problems are:

Lack of Emphasis on Civic Education and Character Training.

Civic Education is not given the required prominence in the Nigeria school programme. Before independence in 1960, the colonial education had little or no relevance to the socio-cultural and political situations in Nigeria. At present, the Nigeria society places emphasis on certificate and wealth without corresponding emphasis on character. Consequently, rather than producing objective and patriotic human beings, the Nigeria educational programme produced many uncritical citizens who are also selfish and indifferent to public affairs (Bello-Imam and Obadan, 2004).

Non implementation of Social Studies programme at the senior secondary school level. Between 1971-2007 Civic Education was taught as an integral part of Social Studies. However, the teaching of Social Studies was not implemented at the senior secondary school in Nigeria. This implies that, at the critical time when the Nigerian youths need effective civic training, there was no adequate provision for civic contents in the school programme. According to Jekayinfa, Mofoluwawo and Oladiran (2011):

It became evident that the lack of civic education and patriotic orientation had led to disorientation in schools and the larger society. The consequences were being felt at all strata of our society. The prevalence of trend of corruption, indiscipline, disrespect for both elders and the rule of law, indifference to duty are some of the manifestations of negative trends in the Nigerian society....p. 149.

Disorganized and Duplicated Civic Education Curriculum

The disarticulated era of civic education in Nigeria was characterized by disorganized curriculum content

particularly at the upper basic education level. There were series of duplications in the curriculum contents within and between educational levels. Some of the duplicated contents are shown in Table 1

Table 1: Some Duplicated Civic Education Contents at the Upper Basic Education Level.

Class	Theme	Topic
Js1	Citizenship	Rights and duties of citizens
	Human rights	Meaning of human rights
	Rights and obligations of Nigerian citizens	Types of human rights
J S 2	Representative democracy	Elections and voters responsibility
	Nigerian constitution	Constitutional development in Nigeria
J S 3	Representative democracy	Voter education and election
	Nigerian constitution	The current Nigerian constitution

The table above shows that in JS I, the concept of human rights appear under three themes. That is, JS I students will learn the concept of human rights at three different times within the same academic session. Also, concepts of election and voters’ responsibility/education appear both in JS II and JS III syllabi with the same contents in several cases.

Unstable Civic Education Programme

After one hundred years of existence, Nigeria is yet to develop a stable civic education programme that can effectively be used to develop in the learners national values and skills for civic engagement. Generally, the Nigeria secondary school curriculum suffers high level of instability. Newly introduced programmes are aborted and replaced with another ones. Adeyemi (2010) commented that the current school curriculum is bereft of the rich cultural heritage of our people and formal education pays less attention to the moral training of the youths. This has resulted into immoral laxity in the society.

Lack of Adequate Human Resources For Civic Education

According to Shetu (2011) “Teachers are critical to the success of this bold initiative by committing themselves to professional development so as to effectively handle civics in schools”. Despite the recent emphasis on the teaching of civic education in Nigeria, teachers are not trained to be able to teach the subject more effectively.

Falade (2012) investigated the competence of primary school teachers in the teaching of civic education in Southwest, Nigeria. He discovered that primary school teachers do not possess adequate civic knowledge and they do not demonstrate sufficient positive civic attitudes that can help them to have the competence of teaching civic concepts at the primary

school level. This finding corroborates the position of Adeyemi (2012) that in some schools, History and Geography teachers who do not have indepth knowledge about the subject are saddled with the responsibility of teaching it.

Recitation and Rote Learning Method

Participatory approach is not often adopted in teaching civic values in Nigerian schools. The conventional teaching method use in our schools hinder learners from acquiring and demonstrating civic values and skills. In cases where students learn civic values and contents through recitation and rote learning, they are not well prepared for civic engagement and group role mechanism when they become adults.

Prospects of Civic Education in Nigeria

Nigeria was amalgamated to become a single nation in 1914. However, the country has not experienced enduring national peace and integration since her existence. Civic education is capable of achieving the following if it is effectively taught in Nigeria:

i **Value-reorientation.** Osuagwu (1997) surveyed the Nigerian value system. He discovered that core values that could promote political stability, unity and national integration were not imbibed by the respondents. This accounts for the socio-political and economic problems that have hindered national progress since Nigeria got her independence in 1960. Civic education is capable of engineering sustainable value-reorientation which can break the vicious circle of socio-political and economic problem in the country.

ii **Effective citizenship.** Civic education seeks to expose our pupils and students to the tenets and rudiments of citizenship education. The teaching of the subject will lay strong foundation for effective citizenship education and public participation in governance (Jekayinfa, Mofoluwawo and Oladiran, 2011).

iii **National peace and integration.** Shaftel cited by Okam and Lawal (2011) pointed out that an acquisition and development of enduring civic values among youths is designed largely to ensure sanity in the political, social and economic life of any country. Civic values constitute the necessary foundations for a peaceful, united and virile nation.

iv. **Nation building.** Nation building requires selfless, responsible and patriotic citizens. Through Civic Education Nigeria can raise nation builders who will work to achieve national objectives, goals and ideals. Danladi (2011) concluded that while accepting the fact that education, generally, is a vital tool for nation building, Civic Education is specifically vital for citizenship missions in nation building

CONCLUSION

The paper reveals that civic education plays significant role in national development. The demonstration of civic values and skills is a necessary foundation for a virile nation. Civic education inculcates in the citizens the norms and ideas of democratic and patriotic living. Civic education is the training for equity, justice, responsibility, freedom, patriotism, honesty and obedience to rules and regulations. One of the reasons why Nigeria has not experienced enduring peace and national integration after one hundred years of existence is the little emphasis put on civic education in the country. The teaching of civic education has not been given the right status in the Nigerian school programme. This has had negative effects on the values and civic engagements of the Nigerian citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the submission in this work, the following recommendations are made:

1. Well prepared and stable civic education curriculum should be designed for every level of the Nigerian school programme. There is an urgent need for the Nigerian government to develop relevant and functional civic education curriculum for the various educational levels in the country.

2. Civic education should be the central goal of the Nigerian educational system. Civic education should be given the right priority in Nigeria. Acquisition and demonstration of civic values and skills should be the main theme of the Nigeria school programme. This is because the prosperity of a country does not depend on the strength of its fortification or revenue but rather, on the number of responsible citizens and men of character.

3. Teacher education programme should be developed for civic education. Civic educators should be properly trained to develop the civic knowledge and values that they are expected to teach.

4. Participatory approach should be adopted in teaching civic concepts. Our students need active participatory approach for effective civic engagement. At the classroom level, students must be given opportunities to be involved in developing rules, functioning as group members, taking up responsibilities and managing their own affairs.

5. Grass-root and community based informal civic training should be undertaken all over Nigeria. Patriotic Clubs can be introduced in Nigerian communities to enhance group participatory and community based informal civic training programme.

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