
CIVIC EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: ITS IMMEDIATE VALUES AND LIFE-LONG IMPACTS

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Abstract

Civic education has been recognised as a compulsory school subject that exposes students to their rights, duties and obligations and how good citizens of a country should be ready to perform their civic responsibilities towards the growth and development of their society and the nation at large. Recently in Nigeria, a lot of political and economic problems such as kidnapping, killings, abductions, religious and ethnic rivalries with vandalism are very predominant and these had led to the re-introduction of Civic education. It is to ensure that students who have been taught their duties, rights and obligations, the nation's values and constitution will become more responsible adults. This paper, therefore, takes an overview of Civic Education beaming searchlight on some contents that could correct socio-political anomaly and also brings to the fore two major problems confronting the subject in schools: inadequate manpower and rote learning method of teaching. This paper, therefore, posited that if Civic education is well taught in schools and teachers act as role models to students by exhibiting positive behaviour, the country would definitely become a better nation and indeed a just and egalitarian state.

Keywords: civic education, civic contents, value re-orientation, and life-long impacts

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Introduction

Nigeria has been faced in recent times with diverse problems which have been militating against the growth and development of the nation. The political landscape in Nigeria can best be described as hostile and too hot for any comfortable development. Recently, there have been several cases of kidnapping and human trafficking has increased drastically, no election can be said to be free and fair because of political killings, snatching of ballot boxes to different levels of riggings which have been the order of the day. A lot of agitations are going on from the Niger Delta boys called the 'avengers'. Independent people of Biafra (IPOB) & Movement for the Emancipation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) are agitating for secession. Obviously, there is a divide. In the midst of all these social, political and economic unrest, no meaningful development can be achieved.

Okan and Lawal (2011) opined that the problem of negative citizenship values have gravely militated against Nigeria's march towards effective and sustained socio-economic and political development since independence. He further stressed that the retrogression and dilemmas of the country demand value re-orientation through a commitment to the ideas rooted in civic education. Falade and Adeyemi (2015) posited that for Nigeria to achieve faster growth and national transformation through national integration, every citizen must acquire and demonstrate civic values and traits. There must be a study of good citizenship and proper membership in every community in order for the society to achieve its desired growth. Civics is the study of good citizenship and proper membership, civic education is also the study that would ensure good citizenship and proper membership. This paper therefore does an overview of civic education content and its implication for life-long development.

An Overview of the Contents of Civic Education

Civic education has been with Nigeria long before the advent of Europeans. The traditional Nigerian setting placed the duty of inculcating right values and morals into the younger ones on the elders in the family and in the entire environment. Every parent and family celebrated hardwork, honesty, fairplay, justice, kindness and discipline. Fafunwa (2004) gave a description of indigenous African training that emphasised character training, functionality, social

responsibility, job orientation, spiritual and moral values. This was long before the introduction of Western education.

However, Civic education as a school subject had metamorphosed from one stage to another between then and now, shortly after the independence the subject was called civics and was taught in all elementary schools. It was later changed to General Knowledge. Later it also became sub topics in the social studies curriculum. The introduction of the 9- year Basic Education led to the re-introduction of civic education as a separate subject to be taken compulsorily at all primary and secondary schools. Dr. Sam. Egwu, a former minister of education emphasized that the re-introduction of Civic education as a compulsory subject in all primary and secondary schools was both germane and expedient for the growth and development of Nigeria, because it was to bring about the objectives of the National Economic and Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS): value-reorientation, poverty eradication, job creation, wealth generation and using education to empower people (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council-NERDC, 2007).

Ogunkeye (2012) therefore, defined civic education as the education given to young people with the aim to make them grow and develop into responsible citizens who know and understand their rights, duties and obligations which will make them participate actively in the growth and development of the society, nation or country. Civic education is equipped with a lot of topics that has been designed to ensure growth and development in every child, the aims of the subject is clearly spelt out in the definition above. For example, it aims at making the child develop into a responsible citizen. The child does not just develop, but develops into a responsible citizen, after he or she has been exposed to civic education. Fakorede (2015) also gave his definition of Civic Education as an educational and learning activity directed towards an individual of a state to enable meaningful development of their state. He further opined that civic education is to enable government make informed decisions on their own and take responsibility for their own lives and societies.

The subject places value on the usefulness of an individual to his environment, it exposes an individual to his social rights and responsibilities, while showing some rights that citizens should enjoy. It also shows an individual his expectations as a citizen of a country. It

teaches students the right values; in fact the first topic on the curriculum list is values, its definition, types and selfless. While most authors gave the definition of values to mean different things, the most important thing here is that all authors agreed on the concept of value to mean sets of ideas, principles, beliefs, norms and qualities that determine or influence how people behave in a society. This definition of value tells us how important this content of civic education is. A situation where citizens do not understand the principles or set of values of their immediate society, could lead to chaos in the environment. It could also lead to value disintegration: Value disintegration occurs when young citizens are not properly integrated into the social norms and values of their families and society. Civic education, therefore, allows us to avoid value disintegration in the society. The Nigerian society celebrates honesty, hard work, justice, fair-play, contentment, integrity, discipline, selflessness and other positive values. These are the sets of values the Nigerian society celebrates, and all have been well spelt out in the content of civic education.

Civic Education as a subject also teaches human rights. The topic human right exposes young citizens to understanding their human rights as enshrined in the constitution. Students are taught that human rights are the privileges, opportunities, prerogatives, benefits and advantages that every citizen of a country must enjoy (Samuel, 2011). It teaches that apart from the fact that human rights are constitutional, they are first and foremost fundamental, they are also inalienable and indivisible. Fakorede stressed further that human rights include all classes of rights under social, economic, civic, political and environmental rights i.e. rights to life, right to dignify of human person, right to freedom of movement, right to gainful employment, right to engage in lawful business, right to private and family life, right to join any religious organization, right to vote and be voted for, right to peaceful assembly and so on. Civic education not only exposes students to human rights, it also teaches how to defend and fight for those rights. In fact, this is the only subject in the secondary school curriculum that teaches human rights from junior secondary school one to senior secondary school three.

Civic Education also teaches democracy and pillars of democracy, which are the social and political fundamental structures on which the survival of democracy depends. It gives a clear understanding of what

democracy is and how best it can be practised. The subject teaches the history of democracy and also sheds more light on how citizens should behave in a democratic dispensation. It spells out the roles of representative government, the majority and minority in democratic dispensation. Students in the area of science and technology were not exposed to topics like, the functions of government, the structure of government and federation in Nigeria, the subject Civic education, as a compulsory subject in Nigeria, has alleviated this obvious problem. All secondary school students in Nigeria now have an in-depth knowledge of government and governance at all levels and should be able to explain explicitly the functions and needs of the local governments too.

The social problem of cultism has been taken care of in civic education. The history, reasons students join the group, consequences of cultism and very interestingly the subject are also spelt out preventive measures against cultism. Students are made to bear in mind the social stigma and regret of cultism. Students are already aware of the methods of luring people into cultism, so no one would claim innocence when asked to join later in universities or other tertiary institutions.

Civic education also offers for the first time in secondary school the topic, 'political apathy'. Fakorede described political apathy as the lack of interest in the political activities of one's country. It can be described as not getting involved in any political issue of the country and losing interest in elections, public opinions, civic responsibilities and in politicians. Political apathy has its forms and reasons. Part of the reasons are bad governance, corrupt leaders, unfulfilled political promises, fear of insecurity, poverty, rigging of election dissatisfaction or frustration. This subject proffers solutions to the aforementioned problems. Again, this is the only teaching subject in secondary that teaches the topic, 'political apathy'.

Ogundare (2011) defined national unity as the state of being in agreement and working together to achieve a purpose. Samuel (2011) described national integrity as demonstrating high and strong moral principles towards upholding national values like honesty, truthfulness and trust. Fakode (2015) also opined that national consciousness means the ability of citizens of a country to understand or be aware

of what is happening around them. These three key concepts are very powerful tools for national development and when students internalize them they become responsive and responsible adults and citizens. These concepts are veritable tools that encourage every citizen to love, respect, show concern for other and also embrace the unity and harmony of Nigerian states.

Social problems of drug abuse and trafficking, poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDs and human trafficking were also carefully selected; the subject does not only beam searchlight on these problems it also proffer solutions to them. Recently in Nigeria, the issue of human trafficking is alarming, people crossing borders on foot and on the seas. Civic education is giving students hope that the country will become better when people begin to celebrate right values. However, the contents of Civic education as laudable as they appear might not achieve the desired objectives the subject was set out to achieve, if the obvious problem of lack of qualified personnel and inadequate manpower is still persistent (Shetu 2011 and Falade 2012). Teaching method of rote learning with memorization has been recognized as the most prominent methods of the subject delivery (Falade and Adeyemi, 2015). This type of method cannot possibly allow both students and teachers exhibit the kind of values the society expects, the implementers of this subject cannot also afford to teach without bringing the theory to everyday, real life experiences.

Teachers of Civic Education should therefore be adults of impeccable character. They must publicly live a life of transparency, honesty, fairplay, commitment, punctuality, selflessness and also exhibit right values always. Most students will want to be like their teachers, since teachers are role models and mentors, they are expected to first and foremost act what they teach so students can sure that exhibiting proper citizenship and right value is attainable.

Impacts of Civic Education in the Secondary School Education

The re-introduction of Civic Education as a teaching subject is of great benefit. The fact that it is a compulsory subject in schools is a welcome development. The lifelong impacts of the subject cannot be over emphasized. It inculcates the necessary values in an individual for a lifelong and all round development (Falade and Adeyemi, 2013).

The subject encourages political stability. When people are well informed and young citizen who are being indoctrinated from their young days get to positions of authority, they will not be like the set of representatives or senators who could throw chairs; they would be civil adults. They would also be citizens who can get involved in politics not for its gains but to share their wealth of experiences towards development. These would be adults who would believe politics is not a do-or-die affair but a service to humanity. Samuel (2011) also posited that good knowledge of Civic education leads to sustainable development. Popular participation of citizens in government will allow government to adopt policies and enact laws that are relevant to the development of the society. It is the good knowledge of Civic Education in the area of political apathy and participation that allow citizens to get involved in political discussion which will change the course of thought of government.

Civic education gives room for the gathering and association of different people at different times. This gathering allows for sharing of ideas and useful information about citizens' welfare because individuals have been equipped with necessary skills for successful functioning in the society. Credible and responsible people will be elected into positions of authority through the good knowledge of Civic Education. Students that have gone through civics training will be better leaders and would be expected to work to improve lives of people in the society.

Moral decadence and anti-social behaviours among citizens of a country would drastically be reduced. There will be high level of tolerance and respect for the views of other people in the society. Students who had been exposed to civic education would be able to tolerate other people's religions and ways of life. It will help citizens to internalize the cultural norms and value of the society. Kidnapping, dishonesty, laziness, killing and maiming during election, vandalism, and destruction of lives and properties are not part of Nigerians value system. Lastly, Civic Education helps to proffer lasting solutions to almost all obvious social, economic and political problems in the society through teaching and encouragement of acceptable behaviours.

Concluding Remarks

Civic education prepares students for life-long development. When an individual has the proper citizenship or civic education, the individual is able to contribute his or her quota to the development of the nation. The obvious importance of Civic education cannot be over-emphasized. Hence, teachers of Civic Education should be well equipped with the necessary skill and also exhibit good character traits so as to act as role models for future leaders. The Nigerian state will become a nation free of internal rumbles if citizenship education is strictly adhered to. Nigeria will also produce citizens who would be self-sufficient for a dynamic nation, and indeed, the objectives of a just and egalitarian state shall be achieved.

The following suggestions are made based on the submission in this paper

- Qualified and competent teachers should be employed to teach Civic Education in schools
- Government, at all levels, should organise frequent seminars and workshops for serving Civic Education teachers so as to equip them with the necessary training and teaching expertise required in the delivery of the subject
- Should be done away with in Civic Education but lesson should be made both interactive and practical enough so that students can actually be involved in exhibiting the right value from the classroom
- Lastly, teachers should be role models to their students because the behaviour of teachers will make his or her teaching more practical and real than just the theoretical approach to the content delivery.

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