
USING PROVERB AS AN ASPECT OF NATIVE LANGUAGE
IN TEACHING CIVIC EDUCATION TO THE NIGERIAN
CHILD: A NON-FORMAL APPROACH

OKOROAFOR, Elizabeth Ihuoma

*Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages,
University of Ilorin,*

&

NNADI, Catherine Chiaka

Department of Igbo, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo.

Abstract

One of the best ways to ensure the upbringing of a morally sound child is through good civic education. However observation has shown that many Nigerian youths commit various categories of immoral acts, perhaps due to ineffective use of proverbs as a feature of native language to inculcate the cultural and moral values to them in their respective societies. This study therefore investigates the relationship between the use of proverb, an aspect of native language and civic education of the Nigerian child, particularly through the non-formal approach which includes the home, church/mosque and society. The findings of this study proved that proverbs as a veritable feature of native language could be used effectively to inculcate good morals in Nigerian children through a non-formal approach to ensure breeding of morally sound Nigerian children. It is recommended that parents, religious groups, and the society at large should imbibe the culture of using proverbs in their respective native languages from time to

time, to educate the Nigerian children, to nip at the bud the issue of corruptpractices among children.

Key Words: *Native Language, Proverb, Civic Education, and Non-formal*

Introduction

It is no longer a new saying that the progress and development of any country depends on their youths. It has been observed that no meaningful development can take place without the active involvement of a country's youths. They are the young people, endowed with raw energy, high hopes, dreams, aspirations and ideas of what their tomorrow would be. They are anxious and dynamic, always bubbling in spirit. Ezeaku opines that 'the youths' surplus energy can become useful for the welfare of the country when exploited', hence proper guidance and direction can bring them in the forefront of peaceful and national development especially in the anti-corruption fight. Falade (2008) attests to the fact that in many countries of the world, the development of the value of civic responsibility in the citizens has become an urgent task. He notes that the rate of moral decadence ins Nigeria has reached an alarming stage. Falade thus opines that the most possible reasons behind this unpatriotic attitude is due to negative attitude of the citizens to peaceful co-existence, democratic principles, social relations and the political system in general.

Jamieson (2001) opines that because democracy has to be born anew every generation, education is its midwife. The quality of civic education has been a concern of those interested in the health of any system of government and the well-being of the citizenry. For example, the Americans have a high expectation that the schools should shoulder the responsibility of preparing the citizens, nurturing the children towards being loyal and to have common values, so that from them a strong national character could be built. That is the more reason why the classroom is taken to be both training ground for democracy and the incubator of its leaders. This opinion of Jamieson was opposed by the scholars of the US history who opined that "it was first religion and next education that

engaged the attention of the early settlers.” Whereas the Puritans justified the teaching of reading primarily as a means of accessing Scripture, Benjamin Franklin envisioned schooling as a means of “laying such a foundation of knowledge and ability as, properly improved, may qualify individuals to pass through and execute the several offices of civil life, with advantage and reputation to themselves and country.

Nigerian youths in the past contributed to the development and unity of the country through activities like football and other sporting activities without necessarily going to formal education to acquire the skills. In the fields of information technology, business, agriculture, industry and many more, they have played critical roles and even in the present times, the contributions of the youths through the National Youth Service Corps can never be over emphasized. Observation has shown that the afore-mentioned objectives can be achieved through civic education which inculcates sound moral values in the youths. Hence this study examines the use of proverbs as a vital aspect of native language and civic education as a non-formal approach in curbing corrupt practices among children in today’s Nigeria.

Civic Education

Civics is the branch of political science that deals with civic affairs and the rights and duties of citizens. Civic deals with the area of political science concerned with citizenship. It is also the study of the political rights and responsibilities of citizens and of the operation of government (Collins Spanish Dictionary, 2005). The Encarta Dictionary added that the term, ‘civic’ relates to the government of a town or city. It is connected to the duties and obligations of belonging to a community. If education is a process of imparting / inculcating knowledge through teaching and learning, civic education therefore means imparting / inculcating knowledge of duties, rights and obligations of belonging to a community or city to the young generation of a nation. This includes teaching them their political rights and duties from and to their nation.

Among the several definitions of civic education, It can also be defined as the education that brings awareness about the legal

culture, clear civic position, and readiness for consciousness and voluntary service to any nation's people. It is a tool that helps in the formation of a citizen who is able and willing to live in a civic society and is also aware of the state of the law. From these definitions of civic and civic education, one can then affirm the guess of some political analysts that, lack of civic education and patriotic orientation had led to disorientation in schools and the larger society thereby leading to gross misconduct among the youths.

Utulu (2011) opines that Civic Education becomes very important; hence it seeks to introduce learners to the process of democratic socialization by promoting support for democratic behaviours and values among citizens. Utulu maintained that the lack of civic education and patriotic orientation had led to disorientation in schools and the larger society, leading to serious occurrences of corruption, indiscipline, disrespect for both elders and the rule of law, indifference to duty, embezzlement of public fund, to mention but these few. Similarly, Falade (2012) said that Civic Education is a set of practices and activities aimed at making the young people and adults better equipped to participate actively in democratic life by assuming and exercising their rights and responsibilities in the society. According to Utulu (2011), recognizing the importance of civic education as a vital tool for peace and development of any country will increase a country's desire for civic education in schools.

Civic education as a subject is to be taught in primary and secondary schools, while expecting to further deepen democratic culture and encourage qualitative participation of the average Nigerian in the government process. Re-introducing civic education in Nigerian primary and secondary schools has become very obvious due to the high level of moral decadence and dwindling national consciousness, social harmony and patriotic zeal. Obasanho (2014) pointed out that according to a research conducted in 2009, only 34% of 1,200 students in Nigeria were aware of civic education. The other 66% did not know anything about the subject. Therefore, one can say that the problem of moral decadence in the nation can be traced to this fact that it is not every school that provides its students with this crucial subject, or perhaps, teachers just do not

know how and what to teach their students in this subject (civic education). Given the ultimate goal of civic education, Nigerian government has at one time or the other adopted different means of educating and instilling good moral and civic values in people. Such means are: JAJI Declaration, War Against Indiscipline, MAMSERN and a host of others. They have designed several programmes and workshops including training outfits where the youths are trained and are empowered to be self-reliant. Hence fulfilling the main purpose of Civic education which is the attainment of a level of individual consciousness that can be characterized approximately thus: "the fate of my nation, my state, my own fate, my relatives' fate depends on what and how I do, how I behave and what I vote for; I am answerable for everything that I do, I must do everything according to the law and conscience". It also include the formation of citizenship as an integrative quality of any individual, which includes internal freedom and respect for state power, love for Motherland and the desire for peace, self-esteem and discipline, a harmonious manifestation of patriotic feelings and culture of inter-ethnic communication.

The teaching of Civic education involves not only the youths but the efforts of teachers, parents, and social organizations. Therefore, the quality of civic education should be of paramount concern of all the stakeholders of the nation. In a country like America where their leaders view civic education as a means of ameliorating the country's democratic low level of youths participation and non-proficient student performance on a widely respected civic assessment test, they have made efforts to increase the amount and quality of time spent in the teaching of civic education and that has ignited a movement to create common standards in the Social Studies

In a country like America, the quality of civic education has been a concern of those interested in the health of their system of government and the well-being of the citizenry. For much of the nation's history, American leaders have ideals. Though there seem to be a big controversy about the content of what should be taught and the expected value of what is taught. Falade (2014) noted that one of the major problems that hindered national unity and

development in Nigeria is low level of acquisition and demonstration of civic norms. Alao (2012) also opines that Nigeria's development is not commensurate with her huge population, due to intellectual and social bankruptcy of her citizens. Okan and Lawal (2011) aligned themselves with the opinion of Alao, (2012), though with a slight moderation. They said that the negative citizenship value of Nigerians have caused the nation a very big setback in their socio-economic and political development.

Challenges of Civic Education

Though Civic education has inestimable value in proper orientation of the youths of every country, it is not without challenges. In America, Kathleen Hall Jamieson noted the following points: that while the Reformers are busy seeking to increase the quality and accessibility of civic education in schools, they are confronted with five basic challenges such as: Negligence by the federal and the state government in making high-quality civic education a priority, a conclusion justified by evidence showing that the systematic study of civics in high school is not universal; hence fewer high schools offer civic courses now than they were offered in the past. He observed also that the time devoted to teaching the subject in lower grades has been reduced; and that most states do not require meaningful civics assessment. Secondly, those Social Studies textbooks may not adequately convey the knowledge or facilitate development of the skills required of an informed, engaged citizenry. Third, consequential differences in access and outcomes between upper- and lower-class students persist. Fourth, cutbacks in funding for schools make implementation of changes in any area of the curriculum difficult. Also the polarized political climate increases the likelihood that curricular changes will be cast as advancing a partisan agenda.

While America has identified the aforementioned challenges, Nigeria's problem with civic education as identified by the likes of Adenipekun (2010), Egwu (2010) and Tamunobuomi (2016) are numerous. The few glaring ones however are: Lack of proper implementation of the new curriculum, which poses a lot of challenges to the Social Studies teachers since the subject-matter of

the new curriculum is very related to their discipline; and secondly, lack of proper involvement of the teachers in the curriculum planning by the educators, hence Adenipekun (2010) suggests that the curriculum planners should review the teachers' preparation programme in the subject-matter, teaching competence and skill.

Without losing focus on the main thrust of the study which is about engaging non-formal approach to the use of proverbs as an aspect of native language in teaching Civic Education to the Nigerian Child, this paper therefore discusses the other key concepts of the paper such as Proverb, Native Language and Non-Formal Approach.

Conceptualization of Proverb

Proverb is a word derived from the Latin word, 'proverbium, which means a simple and concrete saying, It means publicity and 'verbium' means a 'word'. According to Nwoga (1978:186) proverb is the "wisdom of many and the wit of one, suggesting, the experience and wisdom of several ages gathered and summed up in one expression". Achebe (1958) attests that 'proverb is the oil with which words are eaten' the imagery of oil depicts that as oil when added to food brighten the food so also does proverb garnishes words or utterances. According to Kammelu (2016), 'proverbs are deeply rooted in culture...'. Chukwu (2016) opines that proverb is a phrase that expresses basic truth that may be applied to common situation and it is regarded as a very important instrument in conveying the custom, belief, thoughts, values and knowledge of a group of people and in their own language. This assertion corroborates the opinion of the writers of this paper that communication or inculcation of any knowledge is best done in a person's native language.

Falade (2012) opines that Civic Education concerns itself with the inculcation of good values into the young and the old citizens of any given nation. Taking this concern of Civic Education into consideration, these authors' views are that a proverb as an aspect of native language may be useful in imparting the expected good values into the Nigerian child. This suggestion finds its justification from the report made by Kioko (2015). According to Kioko, learners benefit from using their home language in education in early grade years more so that learning starts at home in the learners' home

language. Kioko (2015) further opines that skills and concepts taught in the learners' home language do not have to be re-taught when they transfer to a second language.

Starting school in the learners' mother tongue does not delay education but leads to faster acquisition of the skills and attitudes needed for success in formal education. The use of the learners' home language at the start of school also lessens the burden on teachers, especially where the teacher speaks the local language well (which is the case in the majority of the rural schools in multilingual settings). Research has shown that in learning situations where both the teacher and the learner are non-native users of the language of instruction, the teacher struggles as much as the learners, particularly at the start of education. But when teaching starts in the teachers' and learners' home language, the experience is more natural and less stressful for all. As a result, the teacher can be more creative and innovative in designing teaching/learning materials and approaches, leading to improved learning outcomes. In summary, Kioko (2015) said that the use of learners' home language in the classroom promotes a smooth transition between home and school. It means learners get more involved in the learning process and speeds up the development of basic literacy skills. It also enables more flexibility, innovation and creativity in teacher preparation. Using learners' home language is also more likely to get the support of the general community in the teaching/learning process and creates an emotional stability which translates to cognitive stability. It leads to a better educational outcome. In fact, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) asserts that Mother-Tongue (MT) and/or Language of the Immediate Community (LIC) should be the Language of initial literacy at the pre-primary and junior, primary levels, and of adult and non-formal education.

This paper is not just suggesting the use of native language in teaching but specifically, the teaching of civic education via some linguistic feature such as proverbs, idioms, metaphor and folktales, but for time constrain, this paper pays more attention to the use of proverbs for illustrations. Tukur and Hayah (2009) stated that given the fact that Hausa proverbs are very rich they suggest it should be

used as an instrument for inculcating moral values. Hence they defined proverbs as a concise statement which is used in expressing a shrewd perception about everyday life or universally recognized truth. It is a short well-known saying that expresses obvious truth and often offers advice. Falade, Akinola and Adejube (2009) also opined that proverb is a traditional means of moral and social learning among the Yoruba people. Oyinloye (2009) sees the integration of African proverbs as a veritable tool, a behavioural counselor needs for moral and social values. Okoroafor (2016) opines that proverbs can be used in teaching ethical values.

Proverbs used in educating the youths.

The following are some of the proverbs that could be used to operationalize civic education in schools:

1. Ukparaanyagharagharana-esoozu ala n'ili (Igbo) - (The stubborn grasshopper goes to the grave with the corpse); Ukpara Okpokogburu, ntichiriya (Igbo) - (The grasshopper that the woodpecker kills, just died of deaf ears);
2. Wanda yakijinbari, zaijihoho (Hausa) Omotioogbooro, o baokure iboji (yoruba) - (The child that does not take to advice goes to the grave with the corpse).

The above proverbs are used to inform and warn a child against living a careless life. While proverbs in number 2 are teaching a child to live a worthy life of a good citizen hence the benefits are pleasurable.

3. Nwatakwucha aka ya, yaesorookenyerienri. (Igbo) -If a child washes his hands very well, he eats with the elders Omo to bamoowo we aba agbajeun (Yoruba) - A boy that knows how to wash his hands eats with the elders Yaromaikudi, abokimanya (Hausa) - (A boy that has money is a friend of the elders).
4. Ihe a kputaran'akukuite, na-ala n'akukuonu. (Igbo) - (Whatever that is gathered from the sides of the soup pot, goes through the corner of the mouth)
5. Ile ti a fi itomo, irini wo o. (Yoruba) - (A house built with spittle will collapse when dews fall on it)

These proverbs in Igbo and Yoruba are used to teach a child not to be dubious because whatever one gets in a dubious means, he/she must spend it carelessly/ lavishly too.

6. Ana esiten'ulomarammapuwaama (Igbo) - (You start from the house to do good before getting to the outside) Ile ni a ti ni ko e so ro de. (Yoruba) (Charity begins at home) These proverbs teach a child to be patriotic.
7. Agbala osoara chamkpsiaka, n'ihenaanaghiafawayan'elu.- Igbo (Do not be in a hurry to lick your fingers because they are not hung up in the kitchen roof), Suru, lo ma se okutajina (Yoruba) Oji ososagbakuruogu, amaghinaogubuwu - Igbo Eniyan to osare lo siogun, komopeogun le - Yoruba (He that runs to war does not know that war is death)
8. O jinwaayoagaanaghiokpojiukwu (He that works slowly does not heat his legs on a stone / Patience cooks the stone) Nwaayobuije (Igbo) (slow is the journey) Agbalaosoemipungugu a ga-atopeatope. - (Igbo) (Don't be in a hurry to peep into a rapped package that will be opened in due course).

Proverbs that Teach Sincerity and Reliability

1. Uka a kparaisikaejiekweya (Igbo) (a discussion that is already agreed upon, only needs a nodding of the head). Keeping to agreement saves a lot of time. When you have an agreement with somebody and you keep to it, it goes a long way in extending the relationship. It helps to build healthy relationship for further dealings. It builds trust.
2. A naghi ere okukoukwuarunanso- Igbo (a fowl with bad leg is not sold locally/in the environ). Someone is not supposed to betray the trust people have on him.

Proverbs About Promptness in Action and the Danger of Delay

1. E meengwangwa e megharaodachi- Igbo (when one does anything quickly, he/she will avoid eventually)

2. Anubuuzona – anummirioma - Igbo (the animal that comes first drinks the better water).

Proverbs About Reward for Obedience and Respect

1. Nwatakwozie/kwochaa aka ya, ya nan di okenyeerikoonri (Igbo) (If a child washes his/her hands clean, he/she will dine with the elders).
2. Nwatafee eze, ezeeruoya aka (Igbo) (if a child worships the king, kingship will reach his hand)
3. Nwaehisekpuru ala, yaanutannyaara (Igbo) (when the calf bends down on its knees, it will suck the mother's breast).

Proverbs About the Reward of Hard Work

1. Aka ajaajana-ebuteonummanumanu (Igbo) (soiled hand brings about oily mouth)
2. Nku a kparan'okochika a na-anyan'udummiri (Igbo) (The firewood fetched during dry season, is been used during wet season).
3. Ukwugwoaju, aguegbuoonu (Igbo) (If the legs get folded, the mouth will die of hunger).
4. Onyeruo, yaerie (Igbo) (if a person works, let he/she eat).

Proverbs on punishment of Disrespect, Ingratitude and Nonchalant Behaviour

1. Nwatabuliennayaelu, ogodoawuchieyaanya (Igbo) (if a child lifts his father up in disrespect, the father's wrapper will cover his eyes).
In this proverb the image of wrapper, stands for the problems and curse that will accompany the act of humiliation.
2. Nwagwiipueze, yaatagbuonyezuruya (Igbo) (When the orphan grows teeth, he will bite or kill the person who raised him up).
This proverb corresponds with the English proverb that say "one should not bite the finger that fed him"

3. Anugbuongwo a kpoyaokporo (Igbo) (After drinking the raffia wine, people call it dry wood).
Some people only recognize people when they need something from them.
4. Onuejibiriaku, abughionu e jiakwuya (Igbo)
(The tone with which one borrows money, is not the same used when paying back).

We cannot end this write-up without mentioning that there are three main types of educational system which are: formal education, semi – formal education and non-formal education. It is pertinent to note that whether system one, two or three of education, they are all systems of imparting knowledge. As the name implies, formal education is a system of formal/organized teaching and learning which is been conducted through schools and other institutions. Levels of education in modern societies can go from preschools to colleges and universities. For this study non-formal education is discussed as the system of education that is opposed to formal educational system. Therefore, non-formal education is that type of educational system that people acquire unconsciously from their homes through their parents and elder ones. Also they can acquire knowledge from their religious leaders and groups, they can also gain knowledge from their societies at large.

Summary/Conclusion

This study talks about the inestimable value of proverbs as an aspect of native language in inculcating good values into Nigerian Children otherwise known a Civic Education. It expressed language as the system of words or signs that people use to express thoughts and feelings to each other and also as a vital tool of communicating thoughts and ideas. Besides, a native language was defined as a language spoken in an area of a sovereign state, notwithstanding the size of the area it may be a federal, state or province, or even some wider areas. While informal-education refers to the acquisition of knowledge through homes by parents and elder ones, religious places through pastors/Imams and societies through peer groups.

It highlighted several proverbs in Igbo, Yoruba and few in Hausa language that can buttress the claim that proverb is a concise statement which is used in expressing a shrewd perception about everyday life or universally recognized truth. It is a short well-known saying that expresses obvious truth and often offers advice. The study therefore recommends that giving these innumerable treasure hidden in the native language via proverbs, all the affected personnel in teaching Civic Education should cultivate the attitude of educating the youths using native language and Proverbs in particular.

References

- Abdullahi, S.M.M, (2009). African Proverbs, Moral and Social Values: A Case Study of Some Selected Hausa Proverbs in Oral Traditions in Black and African Culture, Centre for Black and African Civilization (CBAAC). Nigeria.
- Adekeye, F.B.(2001), Similarities in the Proverbs and some other aspects of the Cultures of The Yoruba and the Jews in A journal of the Yoruba Studies Association of Nigeria. Ibadan. Macmillian Nigeria Publisher Limited.
- Akinjogbin (2009) Yoruba Proverbs and Morality (Iwa Omoluabi). The Past, Present and The future in Bringing our Cultures Home: Festschrift for Bade Ajayi at Chridamel Publishing House, Ilorin.
- Falade, D.A., Akinola O.O, & Adejube S. (2009) Proverbs as Traditional Means of Moral and Social Learning among the Yoruba of Nigeria in Oral Traditions in Black and African Culture, Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC).
- Lawal A, Tukur & Philip H.J. (2009) Hausa Proverbs as Instruments for Inculcating Moral Value; in Oral Traditions in Black and African Culture, Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) Nigeria.
- Onyinloye, O.A. (2009). Integration of African Proverbs, Moral and Social Values in Behavioural Counselling in Oral Traditions in

Black and African Culture, Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC).

Okoroafor, E.I. (2016). *Igbo Proverbs as a Tool for Promoting Ethical and Moral Values in the Society. In Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages: Ibadan.* Alafas, Nigeria Company.