

# **CIVIC EDUCATION FOR EFFECTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper discusses civic education as a veritable tool for effective citizenship and development in Nigeria. The paper x-rayed civic education, concept of civic education, significance objectives of civic education, its importance to the society. The paper also emphasizes strategies for implementing civic education – school based strategies as well as out-of-school based strategy. The highlighted civic education for effective citizenship and development in Nigeria, and concluded that civic education be strategize not in school system alone but in multi-dimensional sectors of the economy in order to reach the unreached towards a better society.*

Civic education in Nigeria is not altogether a new educational endeavour. Indigenous Nigeria was very rich in civil education as the lives of the then Nigerians

revolved around almost completely on it. The indigenous teachers' which were mainly parents and elders ensured that civil education was pervasive and was not to be toyed with. Among others things, children were taught their family history, history and geography of their communities, community governance in which the elders who were in control were respected. Community dose and don't were learned, and taken quite seriously. Their desecration could not be neglected. Character and values' development were promoted. There was respect for elders, constituted community authority and obedience to them. People's rights were recognized and respected. The community through its elders performed its civic roles to the citizens who also reciprocated by loyalty, obedience, conformity to the people's culture, traditions, mores, folk-ways and co-operated in common social tasks at the time. There was general acceptance of the people's belief, values and practices. Civic virtues such as co-operation, dedication to duty, hard-work or diligence were learned. These were some of the aspects of civic education then in high gear.

The introduction of schools (formal education) in Nigeria in 1842 by the colonial masters was accompanied with the introduction of the nomenclature and school subject: civics, civics education. Civics proper was taught in the Nigerian primary school while in secondary schools, it (civics) was taught in the grab of the discrete traditional disciplines of history, government, geography and religious knowledge.

The truism, however, is that under whatever canopy civic education was taught in colonial Nigerian schools, its curriculum content "was culture-bound, with a foreign bias, and was, (therefore) not relevant to the needs and aspirations of Nigerians." (Mezieobi and Domike, 2009 p.10), let alone reflect their ideals or develop in them a sense of responsibility particularly as it relates to love towards their community, their environment and their nation Nigeria. The curriculum reform team of the first decade of Nigerian political independence, by omission or commission, did not see any relevance in civic education and, therefore, shielded it out from the National Educational Policy prescription.

The re-awakening in the minds of the political machine and their educational allies four and half decades after the 1969 Curriculum Reform, of the potentialities of civic education in triggering off the production of informed, responsible and participative citizenry needed for sustainable democratic process and nation-building led the Curriculum Development Centre of the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), under the auspices of the Federal Government of Nigeria, as directed by the National Council on Education, to design or develop the 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum I 200, which curriculum include Civic Education for Lower (primary 1-3), Middle (Primary 4-6) and Upper Basic (JSS) Education.

Civic Education is a core curriculum for Universal Basic Education levels terminating at the Upper Basic Junior Secondary School. At the secondary school level, where there is no straight jacket discrete civic education curriculum, civic education content is couched in and taught as government, history, and religious studies which are

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no core curricula for all students at this level. The same is true of the tertiary levels of Nigeria's educational system. It is probably in recognition of the indispensable attributes of good citizenship which Civic Education should equip all learners with, at the tertiary educational level, that compelled the Federal Government of Nigeria to include Citizenship Education as one of the General studies Courses in Nigeria Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities.

**Recommendations**

In view of the relevance of civic education to our national life, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Since the content of civic education involves the teaching of right type of values, attitudes, habits, skills, patriotism, nationalism and good citizenship, there is need for government to deliberately and consciously ensure its implementation at various levels of government. If war against indiscipline as introduced by Buhari/Idiagbon regime can succeed to a greater extent in Nigeria, there is no reason why civic education cannot be succeed except government adopt their usual mere window dressing attitude to issues in Nigeria.
2. Considering the enormous role that civic education can play at this crucial time of our national life, an advanced institute for the study of civic education should be established. One of the pre-requisites for aspiring to positions in Nigeria should be certificate of attendance of this institute. This will afford politicians, businessmen, judges, law-makers, INEC officials, minister etc.; the opportunity of being re-oriented to develop the right type of values, attitudes, habits and nationalistic feeling towards business, government and the nation.
3. Authorities of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria must ensure that civic education is inculcated and given special attention in order to attain the desired goals of a better and discipline Nigeria.
4. The advanced institute for the study of civic education can equally set up agencies at the various local government levels to reach other citizens that may not be privilege to attend schools or the institute. This will help to re-orientate them towards a better Nigeria.

**The Concept: Civic Education**

Civic education refers to a systematized educative process through which the target learner is oriented to governmental functioning in a given democratic society as well as the learner's rights and correlative responsibilities, all geared at producing or developing, informed, participative, and responsible citizens. This accounts for the description of civic education by Ukegbu, Ezieobi, Ajilege, Abdulrahman and Anyaoha, (2009 p. 1) as " education which is specifically designed in content and

function to produce good, useful ... informed, active, responsible (and morally upright) citizens.”

### **Objectives of Civic Education**

The major goals of civic education are:

To produce responsible citizens;

1. To equip one with knowledge and understanding about how government in a given polity works (principles and practices) particularly in a democracy;
  2. To make its beneficiaries become aware of their rights, duties and obligations;
- The other goals of civic education as outlined by Osakwe (2009:10) include:
3. To equip the learners with the cognitive skills and problem-solving tools that will enable them critically think and analyze civic life related problems, issues and challenges;
  4. To engender participatory civic skills such as working with others and engage meaningful in collaboration rational discussions and decision-making;
  5. To instill civic dispositions such as support for human rights, people consented government, active and enlightened socio-political participation and working to promote citizenship formation and socio-civic competence of the citizenry or the tenets or goals of citizenship.

### **Significance of Civic Education**

Civic education being a core subject in primary and secondary schools in the country is of great significance to:-

- (i) The pupils
- (ii) The students and
- (iii) The society.

### **The Pupils:**

Civic education is introduced into the primary schools in order to expose the learners to their rights and correlative obligations to their civic polity.

It will also improve the learners’ cognitive and affective capacities that are inevitable for analyzing and tackling civic life related challenges.

### **The Students:**

Civic education which is specially designed in content and function to produce good, useful... informed, active, responsible (and morally upright) students. It also instills civic virtues in the students and makes patriotism flow in the peoples’ blood veins as part and parcel of their socio-political living.

The students being one of the beneficiaries of civic education will be equipped with the informed knowledge of how our brand of democracy works and what true democracy means in reality.

### **The Society:**

In a social milieu like the Nigerian society where the citizenry is docile, largely apathetic, irresponsible and where citizens sitting – on – the fence in even matters and issues affecting their lives preponderate, civic education will churn out a new generation of responsible and disciplined citizens. With civic education, socio-civic competence of the citizenry will be in high gear towards institutionalizing a stable and well ordered society.

Civic education encourages active participation of the citizenry in the polity.

### **Components of Civic Education**

*(Obebe, B.d, Muazu, F.J, Ambassador-Brikins H.O.C, Koledoye, S.O. (2012)*

Civic education is the subject that explains our rights, duties and responsibilities as members of our community. It also explains those things which the government should do for us as citizens of our country.

Civic education is made up of many parts called components.

These components are:

1. **Our rights:** These are those things which we should enjoy as citizens of Nigeria. For example, we have the right to vote during elections and we have the right to be voted for too. Also, we have the right to freedom of movement.
2. **Our responsibilities:** this refers to those things which, we must pay taxes to the government.
3. **Talent and fulfillment:** In civic education, we learn that we should use our talents to serve our country. For example, talented footballers are lifting up the great name of the country with their talent.
4. **Freedom of the citizen:** Civic education makes us understand that we are free as Nigerians. We enjoy the freedom to do what we wish, so long as it is within the law.
5. **Open mindedness:** We should accept new ideas and make progress, for example, we they c should look for better and easier ways of doing things so that life will be better for all Nigerians. We can get new ideas from books, magazines, the internet, telephones and many other avenues.
6. **Healthy competition:** civic education helps to build healthy competition. We learn to compete with our fellow men and women without feeling hard towards anybody. For example, if people lose an election, they could go to court to express their views. They should not fight or pay thugs to fight for them. If judgment is not in their favour, they should continue to enjoy their lives as Nigerians and perhaps might win the next time.
7. **Democratic practices:** we should contribute good ideas to the governance of our country.

8. **Academic freedom:** civic education makes us understand that we have the right to education. We should therefore, be eager to go to school and learn from our teachers. We should do our school work, so that in future, we will become great and help develop our country. We should be free to express what we have learnt.

### **Dimensions of Civic Education**

We can look at civic education from the following aspects of our lives:

1. **The political dimension:** We can look at civic education from the way government functions. We can learn how our leaders rule our country and the processes through which they do their work. When we examine this aspect, we will find out that governance is not for one person or just a few people but for everybody. This will help us to learn to become good leaders when we grow up.
2. **The legal dimension:** From this dimension. We will learn the laws of our country and how such laws operate. We can then start practicing the laws. Whatever we do, we will ensure that we operate within the law.
3. **The social dimension:** Here, we learn to relate with other members of our communities. This is very important because we must learn to relate with members of all ethnic groups and people who practice religions that are different from ours.
4. **The economic dimension:** When we study civic education this way. We learn to handle money well and to use it in a way that will benefit our country. Also, we learn about various ways of doing business.
5. **The cultural dimension:** In this dimension, civic education teaches us about the culture of our people. It helps us to understand the way we live, our food, dress styles and our different religions. It also helps us to understand the different kinds of leaders we have and how we should obey them. (Obebe, B. J, Muazu, F. J, Ambassador-Brikins, H.O.C, Koledoye, S. O, 2009).

### **Civic Education for Effective Citizenship and Development in Nigeria**

The study of civic education is as important to any nation as education itself. This is so because every nation aspires to have good citizens who would love it, respect it and if possible, to die for it. That is why the task of educating citizen for democracy is a major objective in every nation's educational system.

The important society attaches to civic education cannot be over-emphasized in the modern world. This is so, because, it promotes the exercise of liberty which entails respect for diversity, politically, culturally and intellectually (Engle and Ochoa 2008),

It is important to note, however, that every country whether democratic or not needs to establish some degree of consensus and conformity among its citizens. This objective can best be achieved through well planned civic education which does not use manipulation and indoctrination. That is necessary because without it the realities of civic education would not be achieved. That is why social studies educators are expected

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to influence the nature, ideals, and realities civic education. For as Engle and Ochoa (2008:28) further state:

If these teachers (social studies educators) are not concerned with the consistency between their teaching methods and democratic ideals, if they do not expose young people to controversy, to contrasting interpretations and to diverse perspectives – in short, if they do not provide every opportunity for students to think for themselves and make decisions on their own, then there is little hope for developing a seasoned commitment to democratic ideals among the citizenry at large.

Since civic education develops in students the necessity for them to love and respect their country, they should be exposed to facts concerning their country. Hence, facts, genuine reasons and exposure to the facts, free from the use of coercive, doctrinaire methods should be used in civic education.

For one to develop genuine love for one's country and participate actively in its affairs, and if possible, to be ready to die for it, one must know something about it. For Patterson in Uchendu (2009: 137) that is every important, he observes' that "We believe that youngsters have to know something before they can be intelligent participators in group privileges, which I take it, is what we mean by citizenship".

In many countries, including Nigeria, civic education takes place in both direct and indirect ways. For example, before one graduates from a high school in America, the person must have spent a semester studying American government and one year of American history. All these, according to Patterson, are crucial efforts at civic education. In studying American government for one semester, one attempts to draw some lesson in sound citizenship practices from the course. There is also a course in modern problems which quite frequently touches upon good citizenship. There is also a great deal of our literature dealing with analysis that will lead to more intelligent citizenship". In Nigeria civic education begins with civics and continues with history etc.

As has been stated before, civic education is necessary in modern society and therefore should be part and parcel of the educational curriculum. As an area of study it creates social awareness that enables people to understand and appreciate their environment and culture. It provides one with useful information concerning the merit and demerits of one's society as well as equipping one in solving certain social problems. In a place – like Nigeria with a multi-ethnic composition, civic education helps to bring together the diverse ethnic groups irrespective of their cultural affiliations. It builds a united group with the common objective of improving the society. It develops critical thinking in the youth and enables them to be active participants in the economic and socio-political life of their society with a view to making them responsible citizenship among the people and helps the youths to develop the spirit of patriotism as well as the necessary valued skills of their society. It develops in them those qualities which the society considers important for its future and well-being.

## **The Importance of Civic Education**

Civic education inculcates in the people their society's basic beliefs values as well as the people's culture and skills. It equips the youths with what the people view as important. It also inculcates in students their rights and privileges as well as their duties as responsible citizens. It makes them to be socially and politically aware, and integrates them into the social life of their society as well as helps them to acquire the skills and competences of their society. Civic education equips the youth with all the pertinent skills that enable them to contribute meaningfully to their society. It makes one patriotic and enables one to participate actively in formulating views that would lead to national progress and development. It creates social and political awareness in the young people the spirit of unity and peace. While recognizing differences, it emphasizes common heritage and the reason why every citizen should be patriotic. This makes civic education very important in every country.

## **Strategies for Implementing Civic Education**

### **School-based strategies**

Professor Uchendu's (2009) description of social studies classroom as a laboratory for civic education" is a clear indication that civic education should be taught in the classroom by professionally qualified social studies teachers. The emphasis of civic education on formal classroom civic instruction in Nigeria should not only be focused on factual knowledge, acquired through students' reading and discussions, but on exposing students to actual civic education related experiences and programmes. Confining civic instruction, however, to the printed pages and discussions, and teaching civic education in the abstract is on a par with teaching swimming by correspondence (Mezieobi and Mezieobi, 2010).

The teaching methods which lend themselves to the effective implementation of civic education programmes are inquiry, problem-solving, simulation, discussion, dramatization and questioning methods. The teaching technique which should be used in civic education instruction and which is embedded in the foregoing teaching methods includes: social survey, opinion polls, field trips, interviews, quizzes, simulation, activities, panel discussion, small group discussion and role-playing. The other techniques are convergent and divergent questions. The expository method or presentation method is also recommended for civic education instruction provided it does not condemn the learner to sheer robot position or make him a passive participant in the teaching interactive process. The expository method that yields the best of result is that which makes possible a "democratized collaborative learning atmosphere in which the learner is actively participating. (Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi, 2008 :84).

The techniques of teaching most desired in civic education instruction as it relates to the Expository or Presentation method are illustrated talks and resource persons' utilization.



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Furthermore, the use of individualized instruction and computer-Assisted Instruction particularly in this age of e-learning hold immense potentials for thorough civic education learning. The use of value clarification strategy and Advance Organizer mode of civic education instruction are also very beneficial.

All good school practices such as occasional class meetings, rules' keeping, and students' participation in school decision-making, keeping the school environment clean, sweeping the classroom and their surroundings, cleaning the windows, greeting their teachers and visitors when they enter the class and about to leave the class, coming to school in time, restricting movements during lessons, enforcing the democratic property of obedience, responsibility and respect, singing the national anthem and saying the national pledge should be tenaciously stuck to and fostered in actually, these, among others, inculcate civic property in the students.

### **Out-of-school strategy**

If civic education is to yield the desired dividends, civic training should not be confined to school based civic education activities alone. A way to turn around the socio-civic ignoring and maladies of Nigerians is to compliment the school-based civic education programme with out-of-school civic education activities. In this way, all the agents of socialization: the family religious institutions, the mass media, society-building and disciplined peer group should be conveyors of civic education in the society.

All said and done, a national re-orientation programme that is focused on parents, the teachers, government, the political elite, the society in general, including all its inmates, need be put in place. Invariably, civic education promoters also need socialization to the tenets of civic life proper.

We should have a Civic Education Policy. In addition, a Centre for Civic Education should be established and manned by Social Educationists.

All human communities in the present 477 local Government areas of the Federal Republic of Nigeria should be made to build each a Civic Centre, perhaps with the assistance of the Local Government or in partnership with the Local Government. The said Civic Centers will serve as Civic Education rallying points even if on irregular basis.

### **Conclusions**

It is fallacious to think that civic education, as evidenced by its curriculum in Nigeria today, is weighty only on government-related themes and law-related education. All facets of life in the society impinge and depend on good civic education programme as it is a panacea for a well ordered and stable civic polity. Civic Education should be both school-based and out-of-school geared for it to have sound meaning in our context.

Nigeria's civic education should largely look inwards to the Nigerian society and its circumstances. Civic education practices elsewhere in the world, that is relevant

to our peculiar situation, should be adopted to complement our civic education mission here. To limit civic education in Nigeria to Lower, Middle, Upper Basic Education levels where young people who are ultimately subject to the negative influences of the wider society are alone, is to toy with the import of civic education as it is the tonic for transforming all humans from civic savagery and its concomitant civic docility to true civic living and civic rebranding that will have a spillover effect on all facets of the nation's life.

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