

## INCULCATING THE SPIRIT OF NATION BUILDING IN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF CIVIC EDUCATION

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### Abstract

*This paper examines how the spirit of nation building can be inculcated in the Nigeria students with the aid of Civic Education. Civic Education is a school discipline that is primarily designed in content and function to produce good, useful, reliable, informed, active and responsible citizens. This paper x-rayed the essence of Civic Education for achieving sustainable nation building, the goals of Civic Education, component of Civic Education, dimensions of Civic Education and the roles of Civic Education in promoting responsible citizens will build a viable, peaceful, and progressive society with effective teaching and learning of topics in Civic Education Civic Education for effective citizenship. This paper therefore recommends that Civic Education should be handled by the social studies teachers who have the integrative knowledge of the environments and Civic Education is just part of the Social Studies curriculum. Teachers must be ready to improve teaching and learning by adopting child-centered methods as against the conventional methods that teachers mostly relied on. Government should find means of making the vision of Civic Education be available to the society at large and Nigeria citizens should always be ready to perform their responsibilities as expected of them.*

**Keywords:** Nigeria, Nation Building, Students, Citizenship, Civic Education.

### Introduction

Civic Education is the education that is concerned with the study of rights and duties of the citizen in a country. It aims at building an informed, responsible and morally-law abiding citizen as well as inculcating in the people a sense of commitment to the fundamental values and principles Okobia (2017) sees civic education as a school subject which prepares people (students inclusive) of a country for their roles as citizens. In the view of Esedebe (2018), Civic Education is a type of education that individuals in the state receive for the positive development of ideas, beliefs, habits and attitudes cherished by the society to enable them live as useful and effective members of the society. It equips the individuals with the knowledge, understanding and skills to play active roles in the society and enable informed citizens who are morally and socially responsible. Corroborating this definition, Ebirin (2019) sees Civic Education as the process of inculcating the basic ethics, ethos and mores into the learners to be good citizens that

will exercise their rights and duties and respect others. In essence Civic Education is a life-shaping form of education which aims at preparing and inculcating in individuals societal values and norms to be responsible citizens in the society.

The future of any country depends on the youths in that country. No meaningful development can take place without their active participation. They are the young people, endowed with raw energy. They have high hopes, dreams, aspirations and ideas of what their tomorrow would be. They are anxious and dynamic, always bubbling in spirit. Their surplus energy when exploited is useful for the welfare of the country. Proper guidance and direction can bring them to the forefront of peaceful and national development. One viable way of achieving this is through civic education, which inculcates sound moral values in the youths. It is the education which aims to help people learn how to become active, informed and responsible citizens (Ukegbu, Mezieobi, Ajileye, Abdulrahman & Anyaoha, 2019). Civic Education remains an important means of teaching the populace about individual rights and what duties and responsibilities the leaders and the led should have.

The noble values of honesty, obedience, hard work, tolerance and faith are germane to stabilising national life and upholding same for determining the development and progress of a nation. Such values regulate the life of a nation and project good image for the country (Abubakar, 2021). Hence, the need to introduce Civic Education to teach citizens the virtues of good citizenships, particularly, the values of obedience, humility and submission to constituted authority. It can be argued that the current insecurity challenges facing the country, ethnic and religious violence, terrorism, kidnapping, rape, political mugging and other social vices are results of the abandonment of civic education by successive governments. Lack of civic education and patriotic orientation had led to disorientation in schools and the larger society, leading to serious consequences (Ireyefoju & Mezieobi, 2017). Furthermore, the prevalence of corruption, indiscipline, disrespect for both elders and the rule of law, indifference to duty, embezzlement of public funds, are clear manifestations of the absence of civic education. Civic values, such as courtesy, respect, charity, tolerance, dialogue have disappeared in our society. There is an apparent entrenchment of militarism, especially among the youth. The dwindling national consciousness, social harmony and patriotic zeal have necessitated re-introducing civic education in Nigerian primary and secondary school because civic education is a very viable tool for peace building, particularly in heterogeneous democratic society like Nigeria (Abubakar 2021). In civic education, part of the curriculum is knowing about values and different ethnic groups, their values and traditions. If somebody from the South knows the way people from the North behave, and their values, he or she will appreciate them more. Civic education teaches how to appreciate other people, their religion, and culture. When you know how other people behave, you can easily relate with them. Civic Education will help Nigerian youths know about their immediate environment and the culture of people they live with.

Invariably, there is the need for children of these days to know about their society. Many of them believe in Western culture and know nothing about African culture. Civic Education will help now that African culture is rich and different from Western culture. The knowledge of culture and tradition of different parts of the country would enhance tolerance, patience, love, endurance and other social vices among the youths, thereby reducing youth restiveness, ethnic and religious crisis, which are threats to a peaceful society. Crisis-free Nigeria could only be possible when the young ones who would take over the mantle of leadership from the elders

tomorrow, know what could lead to crisis and the best ways of avoiding and resolving crisis. These are part of the curriculum of Civic Education. If the youths are given adequate Civic Education, they will have sound mind and tomorrow Nigeria will be great, devoid of problems of embezzlement, corruption, cheating and others. They will be able to know what government wants so that there will be peace and tranquility in the country.

This paper therefore discusses the concept of Civic Education, the essence of Civic Education for achieving sustainable nation building, goals of Civic Education, component of Civic Education, dimensions of Civic Education, the roles of Civic Education in promoting responsible citizenship, duties and obligations of a responsible citizen and Civic Education for effective citizenship and development in Nigeria.

### **The Essence of Civics Education for Achieving Sustainable Nation Building**

Civics education is primarily designed to create a disciplined society for coordinated, harmonious and stable democratic growth for sustainable nation building. These attributes are expressed in the following ways:

- **Installing a Reputable Democratic Electoral Process:** The Nigerian electoral system is in a state of flux. The electoral instruments have undergone reforms, though inadequate, and have suffered implementation neglect. The ascertained lapses in the electoral system are a shared responsibility of the system and the manipulators of the system, continuous political orientation and education is inevitable (Ezedebe, 2018). Civics education will usher disciplined political conducts in our body politic through intellectual development and psychological training that political leadership is for societal service rather than avenues for self-enrichment.
- **Effective Citizenship Development:** Effective citizenship is a very important deciding factor in nation building in both developed and developing countries. Also, national development plans (economic, social, political, scientific and technological aspects) cannot be well implemented without the contributions of effective and incorruptible citizens. Functional citizenship, with sound moral consciousness transparency and committed patriotic spirit, is ideal for sustainable nation building.
- **Enthroning Democratic Stability through National Consensus:** Democratic stability in a polity is achieved through collective national consciousness and determined efforts of citizens to eschew undue inclination to ethnicity, parochial sentiments and mediocrity in the march towards achieving sustainable nation building (Marshal, 2019).
- **Enlightening Citizens on their Civic Obligations:** It is the place of civics education to remind citizens of their inviolable civic obligation to nation building. Against this background, Ukegbu, et al. (2019) remarks that civic obligations include: not only exercise of franchise and payment of taxes, but it has comprehensively embraced display of disciplined social habits, maintenance of healthy conditions, self-reliance spirit and obedience to law, restraints in the abuse of office or power, patriotic feelings, respect for national interest and a sense of commitment to the constitution. Others are uplifting the image of the country, defending the country during emergencies, and assisting in the maintenance of social order in the polity. In addition, there are protecting public funds from misappropriation and squandering. Including, showing commitment to community, state

and national development, lawful declaration of asset on demand by lawful agents, amongst others.

- **Political Socialisation:** Civics Education is prominently focused on promoting political literacy; voter education, increasing participation in politics, inculcating skills for interpreting, analyzing and evaluating political issues. It is aimed at equipping learners with skills for good governance, management of public affairs and resources, leadership training, peace-making, mediating and resolving conflicts that could mar nation building, displaying transparent attitudes in the conduct of national affairs and always being poised for the feelings of patriotic ethnic integration. In all, civics education is expected to achieve democratic governance, stability and sustainable nation building.

### Goals of Civic Education

The goals of Civic Education in Nigeria have their roots in the general philosophy of education of the country and the national educational goals, such as, the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity, inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes, training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social ability for the development of the society ( Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

In specific terms, the goals of Civic Education according to NERDC 2007 in Nigeria include:

- i. To acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that will prepare the young people to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives;
- ii. To create an awareness of the provision of Nigerian constitution and the need for democracy;
- iii. To crease adequate and functional political literates among Nigerians;
- iv. To sensitize Nigerians to the functions and obligations of government;
- v. To inculcate in the child the spirit of self-discipline, hard work, cooperation and respect for authority; and
- vi. To attain the Millennium development Goals (MDGs) and the need to implement critical elements of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS).

### Components of Civic Education

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 highlighted below as stated by Ukegbu et al. (2019)

- **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.
- **Our Responsibilities:** This refers to those things which, we must pay taxes to the government.

- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Democratic practices:** We should contribute good ideas to the governance of our country.
- **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 as submitted by (Schaffer, 2018);

- **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 nor 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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.

## The Role of Civic Education in Promoting Responsible Citizenship

Civic Education, as a discipline, is geared towards ensuring responsible citizenship in these respects: The various aims and objectives of civic education, such as inculcating in the child the spirit of self-discipline, hardworking, cooperation and respect for authority, developing in the child an awareness of and a desirable attitude to the Nigerian constitution are directed towards promoting responsible citizenship. The philosophy of Nigerian Education and the National Policy on Education, where the goals of civic education are derived, were developed to produce responsible citizenship (Ebirim, 2019). Civic Education is highly indispensable in producing responsible and dynamic citizens who will be conscious of the need for moral uprightness as an important ingredient of nation building that will in turn help to bring back or renew traditional values and virtues, such as honesty, obedience, respect, loyalty, justice and fair play and humility etc., that have been eroded or lost in our country.

The curriculum of Civic Education at each level of education is tailored towards ensuring responsible citizenship. This is because it affords the people the opportunity to know about positive aspects of national life, such as unity and faith, peace and progress, national consciousness and national identity and national security. Civic Education affords the citizens of their civic rights, such as the right to life, right to fair hearing as well as their duties, obligations and responsibilities which include being law abiding, respect for the rights of others, payment of taxes and rates and even the qualities of responsible citizens, like responses to national calls and respect for the national symbols. Civic Education is well packaged and it embodies sound education and all round education for children and adults to live a full and useful life in the society. It focuses on the children and ensures that they are well brought up and goes a long way to guarantee responsible citizenship. According to Ebirim (2019), the various topics and contents taught in Civic Education such as values, citizenship, national consciousness and national identity, human rights and rule of law and duties and responsibilities of citizens and the like, as well as the knowledge gained in the course of undergoing the various issues, are supposed to equip Nigerians with skills to deal with various social and personal issues, including economic life skills. Civic Education also promotes and sustains peace and political stability of a nation. Every citizen, in this case, would be aware of his basic rights, obligations and responsibility for the growth and development of Nigeria as a whole.

### Duties and Obligations of a Responsible Citizen

The strength and orderliness of a society depends upon the extent to which its members perform their duties. In any organized community, there are rules and regulations which control individuals. Our performance of these duties and obligations go a long way to bring peace and progress to the society. The following are the duties and obligations of a responsible citizen:

1. **Obedying the Law:** Law and order can only be maintained when citizens are law abiding. Citizens must abide by the constitution; respect its ideals and its institutions, the national flag, National Pledge, the legitimate and properly constituted authorities.
2. **Assisting Law Enforcement Agencies:** A responsible citizen is expected to assist the law-enforcement agents to maintain law and order, and in some cases report criminal suspects to the police. Even though Nigerians are in the habit of not willing to assist the police, such habit should be discouraged. They should, therefore, see the law-enforcement agents, especially the police as partners in progress.



3. **Payment of Taxes:** It is the civic duty of every responsible citizen of Nigeria to pay taxes and other rates. Our inability to pay taxes will make it difficult for the government to provide essential services for the citizens.
4. **Loyalty:** The responsibility of any citizen is to be loyal to the government to help enhance the power, prestige and good name of the country to make positive and useful contributions to the advancement, progress and well-being of the nation and must not plan for the downfall of the government.
5. **Defense:** Every responsible citizen is expected to serve his/her country when occasion calls for it, especially during military attack from another country.
6. Citizens should be proud of their nation and strive to improve the image of their country. Nigerian citizens must try not to be jailed in a foreign country for offences like smuggling of hard drugs.

### **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 (Mezioebi, 2018). 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 to influence the nature, ideals, and realities civic education. For as Okuwenu & Anyacho (2019) further states; 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 (Schaffer, 2018). 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 Okobia (2017) 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.

## **Conclusion**

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

## **Recommendations**

This paper hereby recommends the followings for various stakeholders:

1. Civic Education should be given serious priority in the curriculum of the Nigerian schools
2. Government should find means of making the vision of Civic Education be available to the society at large
3. Nigeria citizens should always be ready to perform their responsibilities as expected of them
4. Teachers in charge of Civic Education in Nigerian schools should be given appropriate skills and knowledge to teach the subject
5. Academic papers and useful materials on Citizenship Education should be published for the Nigerians



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